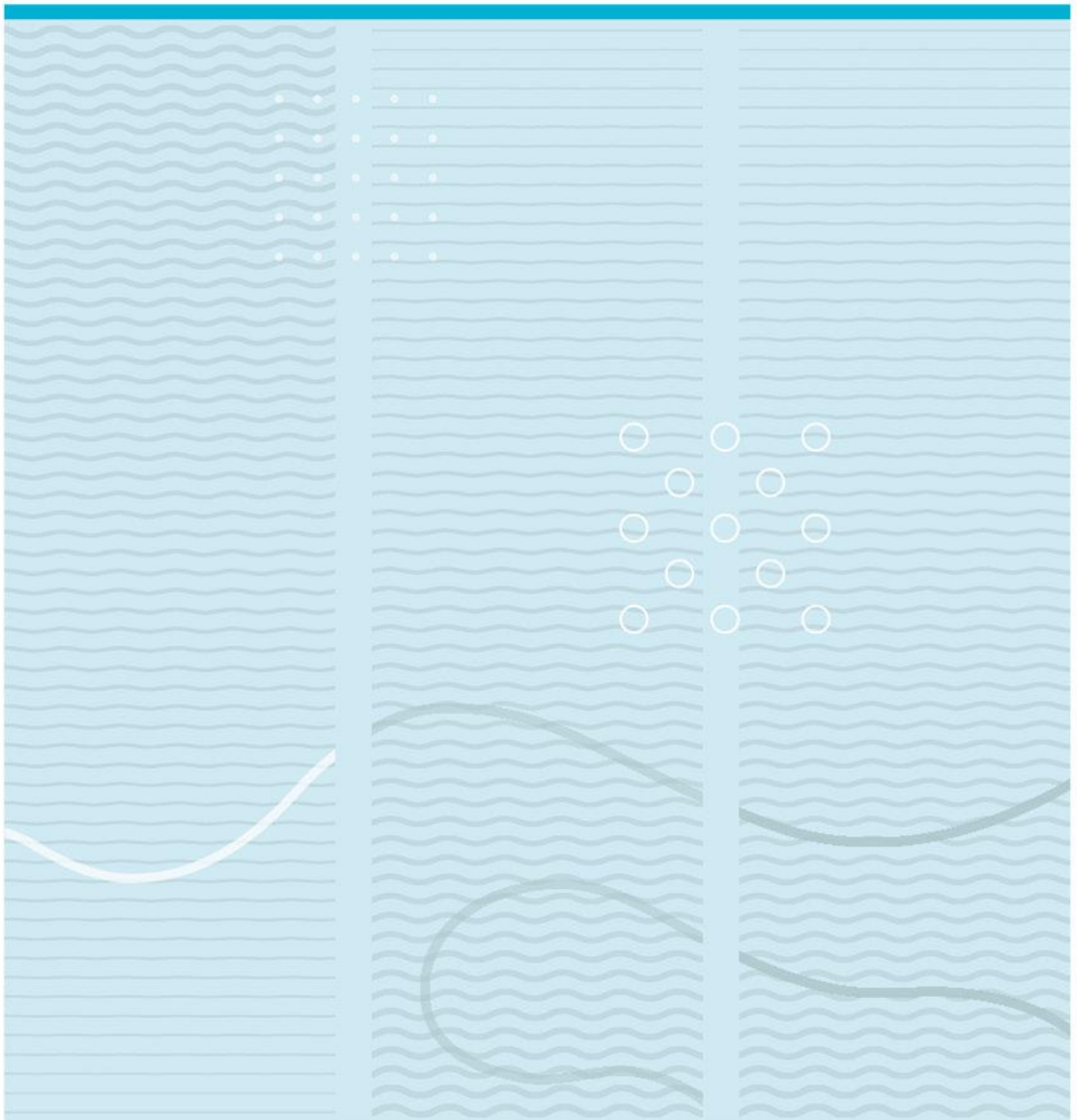


Adham Ashqar

# **Palestinian Elementary School Curriculum as an Instrument for Liberation and Consolidation of National Identity**

*A Critical Freirean Study Based on Teachers' Perspectives in the Gaza Strip*



University of South-Eastern Norway  
Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Sciences  
Department of Culture, Religion and Social Studies  
PO Box 235  
NO-3603 Kongsberg, Norway

<http://www.usn.no>

© 2023 Adham Ashqar

This thesis is worth 45 study points

## Abstract

This study explores the role of the Palestinian curriculum at the elementary stage in providing an instrument for liberation and in promoting the Palestinian national identity. The thesis is based on the perspectives of Palestinian teachers of all the subjects which undergo formal assessment in the Gaza Strip. In-depth semi-structured interviews were carried out with 11 teachers to form the basis for the analysis and the conclusions. The study takes from Paulo Freire's critical theory of education a theoretical framework, where the data collected are analysed in light of Freire's theory. Through thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the collected data through online interviews with the sample of teachers, three interconnected themes are generated concerning the participants' views on the curriculum as an instrument for liberation and for promoting the Palestinian national identity. The three themes are: ambivalence between the content and the common spirit; negative neutrality: key to preserving oppression; and hierarchical bureaucracy: "I'm just a commanded slave!". While the current study problematises the Palestinian curriculum of the elementary stage for being neutral about the oppressive nature of the reality the Palestinian generations have been living due to the occupation, the findings confirm the curriculum's clear deficiency in addressing the challenges the Palestinians face. Based on the findings, the lack of education about the history of Palestine and the detachment of the content of the curriculum diminishes the students' awareness of their national identity. Furthermore, it confines the role of school education at the elementary stage in enhancing and refining the students' perceptions of their oppressive reality, which undermine the Palestinian emancipatory aspirations.

Keywords: identity, liberation, education, curriculum, occupation, awareness

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Dedication</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>List of abbreviations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1 Foreword</b> .....	<b>10</b>
1.1 Researcher’s note .....	10
1.2 Motivation.....	11
<b>2 Introduction</b> .....	<b>13</b>
2.1 Thesis topic .....	13
2.2 Research objective .....	14
2.3 Significance of the study.....	14
2.4 Research questions.....	14
2.5 Background.....	14
2.5.1 Location and context of study area .....	15
2.5.2 Political situation .....	17
2.5.3 Military aggressions on the Gaza Strip.....	18
2.5.4 Education in Palestine.....	18
2.6 Thesis structure .....	21
<b>3 Literature review</b> .....	<b>23</b>
3.1 Identity, nationalism and national identity.....	23
3.1.1 Identity: between usage and definition .....	23
3.1.2 Nationalism and national identity .....	24
3.2 Education, policies and national identity .....	26
3.3 Education and national identity.....	26
3.4 Importance of the curriculum in the educational process .....	27
3.5 Summary .....	28
<b>4 Theoretical framework</b> .....	<b>29</b>
4.1 A task for radicals .....	29
4.2 Banking concept of education.....	30
4.3 Lifeless and alienating content.....	31

4.4	Freire’s libertarian solution.....	32
4.5	The individual as a starting point for the collective.....	32
4.6	Summary .....	33
<b>5</b>	<b>Research Methodology.....</b>	<b>34</b>
5.1	Selection of method .....	35
5.2	Data collection: Qualitative interviews.....	36
5.3	Sampling .....	37
5.4	Scope and delimitation of the study.....	40
5.5	Recruitment of participants.....	40
5.6	Ethical considerations .....	41
5.7	Positionality.....	43
5.8	Data analysis .....	43
<b>6</b>	<b>Data Findings and Analysis .....</b>	<b>48</b>
6.1	Ambivalence between content and common spirit .....	48
6.1.2	Diminishing history .....	52
6.1.3	Passive follower, not active leader.....	54
6.1.4	Promoting ignorance.....	56
6.2	Negative neutrality: key to preserving oppression.....	57
6.2.1	Superficial over-crowdedness.....	57
6.2.2	Incompatibility with reality.....	59
6.2.3	Western funds: false generosity .....	60
6.3	Hierarchical bureaucracy: “I’m just a commanded slave!” .....	62
6.3.1	The teacher: an enthusiastic cog in a rotten oppressive machine – power hierarchy .....	62
6.3.2	Authoritarian dialogue: “we communicate, but you must obey!” .....	64
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>66</b>
	<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>List of figures .....</b>	<b>75</b>
	<b>Annexes.....</b>	<b>76</b>
	Information letter .....	76
	Consent form.....	80
	Information letter (Arabic).....	81
	Consent form (Arabic) .....	84

Interview guide .....85  
Interview guide (Arabic).....88

## Dedication

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

“Allah will exalt in degree those of you who believe, and those who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do” (Quran, 58:11). This study is hope, is driven by hope for a change in the conditions of education in Palestine to be more emancipatory. First and foremost, I dedicate this work to my glorified God. "To Him ascend the good words, and the righteous deeds exalt it" (Quran, 35:10).

To the ones I long to lay a small kiss of love and appreciation on their hands and foreheads like I used to always do every time I see them, my mother and father; to my wife and best friend, Samah; to the love of my life: my daughters Leen and Hana, my students, and all Palestinian children who deserve to receive education that raises their awareness of their identity; to more than half the Palestinian population in diaspora who were coercively ethnically cleansed and deprived from an education that addresses their yearning for belonging; to all the oppressed in the world; to every true human who believes that no one is more human than another and that all the oppressed are equally entitled for support to restore their liberation; to you, my dears, I dedicate my humble work.

Drammen/2023

Adham Ashqar

## Acknowledgement

“He who does not thank people does not thank God” (Prophet Mohammed ﷺ). Several individuals deserve to be acknowledged for their help to complete this project.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to all my friends and everyone who helped in connecting me with my informants. Shokran Jazeelan!

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the teachers who were interviewed for this study for their time, their patience and their valuable input and insightful thoughts. Also, I do not forget to thank the other teachers who expressed their willingness to participate. If not for your privacy, I would have mentioned all your names.

Last but not least, I would like to express my heartfelt *Brasileiro muito obrigada* to my special teacher and supervisor Gabriela Mezzanotti for both understanding my perspective and her willingness to understand it, for her constructive and exceptional communication and for her relevant and trustworthy guidance throughout my writing process.

شكرًا جزيلاً!

Drammen/2023

Adham Ashqar



## List of abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
- OCHA	- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
- OHCHR	- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
- PA	- Palestinian Authority
- PCBS	- Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
- PLC	- Palestinian Legislative Council
- PLO	- Palestinian Liberation Organisation
- UNDHR	- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- UK	- The United Kingdom
- UN	- The United Nations
- UNRWA	- United Nations Relief and Works Agency

# 1 Foreword

## 1.1 Researcher's note

It is easy to observe how my lived experiences are influencing my thesis, including and starting from the choice of my topic through my choice of [and sometimes not] using a reference to my choice of drawing the conclusions on the input Palestinian teachers themselves provide. I have learnt that my personal story matters and being aware of its influence on me and on my thesis will help me better visualise my objective from conducting this research and thus help me throughout the writing journey of my thesis. Therefore, this paper emanates from my perspective as an insider both as a Palestinian who was born and raised in Gaza and as a teacher myself.

To better help the reader understand the writer's conceptualisation of some important terms pertinent to the subject of the present research paper, I believe that it is worthwhile to give some clarifications. As I attempt to follow academic methodology of conducting social research, I take the following concepts as prerequisites but do not attempt in any way to prove them in the paper:

First, in a report titled “[i]srael’s Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity” by Amnesty International released in February 2022, the report clarifies how the israeli occupation state was established on the ruins of the Palestinians state:

[B]efore and after the May 1948 declaration of the State of [i]srael, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forcibly displaced in what amounted to ethnic cleansing. Some were internally displaced from their villages, towns and cities to other parts of what became [i]srael... [i]srael prevents these Palestinian refugees, and their descendants, as well as internally displaced persons within [i]srael, from returning to their former places of residence. (p. 74)

The report describes the practices of the israeli occupation state against Palestinians as ethnic cleansing and clarifies that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forcibly displaced. In a speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2022, the President of the Palestinian Authority said that 529 villages were destroyed and 950 thousand Palestinians were displaced during and after the war on Palestine in 1948, which accounted for more than half the Palestinian population then. They were never permitted to return again. My grandfather and grandmother were among those who were forcibly internally displaced in 1948 from the village of Barbara and the city of al-Majdal Asqalan respectively to the city of Gaza. I and, before me, both my parents were born in a refugee camp. Since then, neither my displaced ancestors nor any of their offspring have been allowed to return. In addition to this, in the same investigation, Amnesty International concludes:

Since its establishment in 1948, Israel has pursued a policy of establishing and maintaining a Jewish demographic hegemony and maximizing its control over land to benefit Jewish Israelis while restricting the rights of Palestinians and preventing Palestinian refugees from returning to their homes. In 1967, Israel extended this policy to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which it has occupied ever since.

Amnesty International has analysed israel's intent to create and maintain a system of oppression and domination over Palestinians and examined its key components: territorial fragmentation; segregation and control; dispossession of land and property; and denial of economic and social rights. It has concluded that this system amounts to apartheid. It has also documented unlawful acts committed by Israel against Palestinians with the intent to maintain this system, including forcible transfers, administrative detention and torture, unlawful killings, denial of basic rights and freedoms and persecution. It has concluded that such acts form part of a systematic as well as widespread attack directed against the Palestinian population and amount to the crime against humanity of apartheid. (Amnesty International, 2022, p. 280)

Consequently, I perceive the so-labelled 'israeli state;' which was initially permitted as a member of the UN under the two conditions of *future* implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolutions 181 (II)<sup>1</sup> and 194 (III)<sup>2</sup>, adopted respectively on 29 November 1947 and II December 1948, but never implemented any of them to the date of writing this paper; as a colonising, apartheid, ethnic cleansing state which I do not recognise, neither did any of the participants I interviewed, even though it had received the recognition of many states, as I consider myself a victim of this state's colonising practices.

Second, as a form of academic resistance, I oppose labelling 'israel' as a proper noun. Hence, I, as the writer of this research, choose not to capitalise it.

## 1.2 Motivation

It was a Thursday, the last day of the week and my last chance to travel from Gaza through Erez<sup>3</sup> Crossing for the first time in my life, 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The purpose for the crossing was to take a flight from Amman in Jordan to Glasgow in the UK for my then-fiancée to get her postgraduate

---

<sup>1</sup> The partition plan 181 (II) provides for the establishment of an Arab Palestinian state on 45 percent of historical Palestine and Jewish state on 55 percent of historical Palestine, with the city of Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* (Latin: "separate entity") to be governed by a special international regime (UN General Assembly, 1947).

<sup>2</sup> 194 (III) is a UN resolution calling for a right of return for Palestinian refugees (UN General Assembly, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> The sole land crossing for the movement of people from the Gaza Strip to the West Bank and the occupied Palestinian territories, and the second option for people in Gaza when Rafah Crossing with Egypt is closed.

study instead of travelling directly from Palestine because there are no airports in Palestine. We used to have one, but Palestinians use the Jordanian and the Egyptian airports because the only airport Palestinians had in Gaza was completely demolished by Israeli occupation bulldozers and air raids in 2000.<sup>4</sup> At around 08:30 am, the UNRWA liaison officer called us to take one bag of clothes each and head towards the crossing. I can only recall being so glad to have this privilege of being a UNRWA staff to be able to travel; later on, I realised that this is a sad story for around 2 million Palestinians who are not UNRWA staff to be able to travel. Not even half the seats of the bus were filled with passengers, to give me an additional reason to how lucky I was to be among this very few who were permitted to cross the highly secured fence.

No one was allowed to get off the bus under any circumstances until we reach the borders with Jordan. On the way, I asked the assistant and ticket collector on the bus to let me know when we pass by my home village, Barbara, where my grandfather was expelled from by force in 1948. After a few minutes, he called me and pointed at Barbara. It took me 26 years to see my home village for the first and only time in my life. I only saw it for seconds and started to pour questions at the ticket collector for I knew that he makes this trip very often. Then, I felt so much subjugation, helplessness and sorrow for I had so little information about my home country. I remember receiving very limited education about Palestine in the books of history, geography and national education. In fact, I used to receive poor grades in these subjects because I always thought that what we learn about the history of mostly-Egypt was totally irrelevant and detached from the life we live under the occupation.

Therefore, as an educator myself and a researcher in human rights, I decided to conduct this research and examine the practicality of the Palestinian curriculum in promoting the national identity and providing education for liberation for elementary school children from the perception of teachers.

---

<sup>4</sup> Yasser Arafat International Airport was opened in November 1998 and ceased operation after less than two years in late 2000.

## 2 Introduction

Those who are stronger wish to continue to expand by including the weaker ones as part of their own and to create unity and oneness, while those who are weaker struggle to establish their identities while resisting expansion and inclusion by those who are stronger, and to finally establish their own individuality. (Lee Byung-Jin, 2003, p. 333)

Education is one of the most influential tools used by states to establish, preserve and reconstruct their national identity. Through education, knowledge, values, history, culture and traditions are transmitted from a generation to another. Therefore, states place a great emphasis on designing a curriculum and making policies that contribute to achieving their objectives.

Historic Palestine has been under the Israeli Zionist occupation since 1948. Ever since, Palestinians have been sacrificing everything they have, including their souls, to achieve liberation. The Palestinian people's struggle does not seem to be well met by the Palestinian Authority in designing a curriculum that promotes their Palestinian national identity and in addressing their emancipatory aspirations. In a study titled "*Education in Palestine, Current Challenges and Emancipatory Alternatives*", Ramahi (2015) concludes that according to the available data in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT), the various political and socio-economic challenges and demands connected with the colonial context in Palestine are not well met with adequate content of the curriculum and assessment methods in formal education. Rather, the currently implemented pedagogy is largely outdated and associated with power structure. Also, the conditions around which the educational system is led lays a fertile soil for students to become passive recipients of outdated and abstract knowledge rather than active participants in creating the knowledge.

In this study, I analyse the role of the elementary school curriculum in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education as an instrument for liberation through the perspectives of a sample of teachers in the Gaza Strip.

### 2.1 Thesis topic

This thesis attempts to examine the role of education in Palestine in liberation and promoting the Palestinian national identity through the Palestinian curriculum in the elementary stage (from the first grade to the sixth grade). This study aims at analysing the Palestinian curriculum's efficiency in providing adequate, relevant and comprehensive knowledge that fosters their awareness of their national identity and contributes to the acceleration of liberation from teachers' perspectives. Qualitative method is selected to conduct this study, where semi-structured interviews with a sample of school teachers of elementary stage teachers are used in this study as a tool to collect the data. I use Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed as a framework to analyse the collected data.

## **2.2 Research objective**

The principal objective of this thesis is to analyse the role of the Palestinian curriculum in providing an instrument for liberation and in promoting the elementary school children's awareness of their national identity. The views of teachers in the Gaza Strip provide a crucial input to the data collected to complete this project as the Gaza Strip is taken as a case study. The collected data will be the basis for the written article and the drawn conclusions.

## **2.3 Significance of the study**

Most of the literature about the Palestinian education and education policies address the authoritarian role of the teacher as the all-knowing element in the educational process. Even when the content of the curriculum is mentioned, it is mentioned as a passing point, without receiving the attention that matches the significance of the role it plays in creating a submissive or libertarian learner (citizen). From this shortage in the literature about the role the curriculum plays in shaping a docile student, rather than shaping an active learner and thus contributor in the education process, rises the importance of this study in putting the content of the Palestinian curriculum under the lenses of the teachers who teach it from an emancipatory point of view following Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

## **2.4 Research questions**

The overall interest of the present project is to generate knowledge about the perspectives of the elementary school teachers in Palestine, with Gaza as a case study, on the construction of the Palestinian national identity in the school curriculum and on education as an instrument for liberation. To address this interest, the following main research questions were formulated:

1. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum as an instrument for liberation?
2. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum in shaping Palestinian national identity?

## **2.5 Background**

Under the Israeli military occupation of Palestine and the antagonistic violence against Palestinian populations, Palestinians continue to live in a highly volatile political environment that weakens many aspects of Palestinian people's life, including student mobility and access to proper infrastructure and education resources (Hamamra, Alawi & Daragmeh, 2021; Alashqar, 2020). While

education for liberation poses a challenge to advanced nations, this topic poses an even greater, more demanding challenge to Palestinians. Education is one of the most important means Palestinian people rely on in their struggle to achieve liberation. However, the quality of education that Palestinians receive today poses yet another layer of the several complex challenges Palestinians face. To be able to discuss the education, through curriculum, from a libertarian lens, there has to be a chapter that presents a context for the study.

The main aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with an overview about factors that helped in shaping the education system in Palestine the way it is today. Geopolitical, economic and social contexts of the study area are presented. Then, a historical background of the education in Palestine is discussed.

### 2.5.1 Location and context of study area

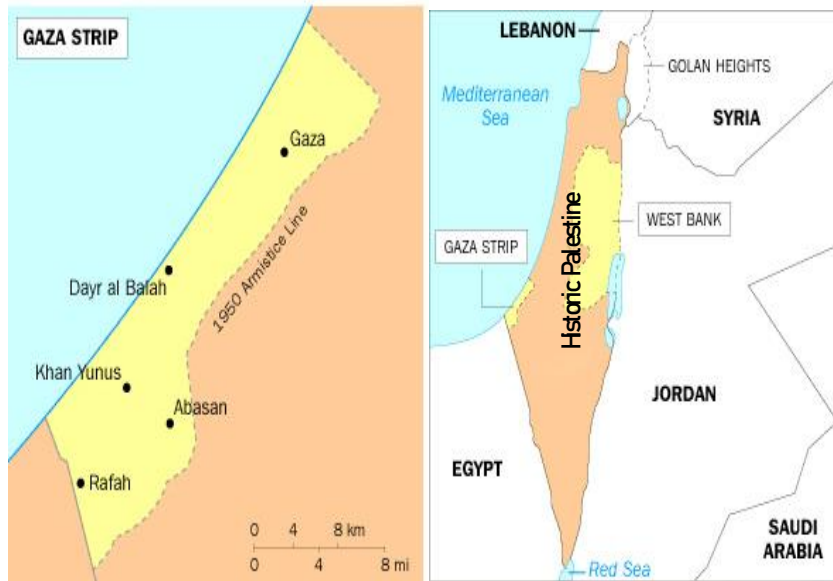
As the Gaza Strip is taken a case study in this research, it is inevitable to describe the context of the study area, especially when the study area is at the centre of the continuous Israeli aggressions and military attacks in the Middle East since the occupation of Palestine in 1948.

The Gaza Strip is a part of the occupied Palestinian territories (see figure 1<sup>5</sup>) which was during the British mandate period called Gaza sub-district as Historic Palestine used to involve 18 sub-districts. It has an area of 365 km<sup>2</sup> (OCHA, 2013) and is located along the Mediterranean Sea on a relatively flat coastal land. The Gaza Strip borders Egypt on the South-West, the Mediterranean Sea on the West, and the occupied Palestinian lands on the North and East (Zeidan, 2019) as illustrated in figure 2<sup>6</sup>. It contains five administrative governorates as follows: Deir al Balah Governorate, Khan Yunis Governorate, Rafah Governorate, North Gaza Governorate (contains Beit Lahia, Beit Hanoun and Jabalia), and Gaza Governorate, which is the administrative and the commercial centre of the Strip (Jouda, 2018), see figure 1. It also includes eight refugee camps, the Beach Camp, Bureij Camp, Deir El-Balah Camp, Jabalia Camp, Khan Younis Camp, Maghazi Camp, Nuseirat Camp, and Rafah Camp (UNRWA, 2021), as figure 3 displays.

---

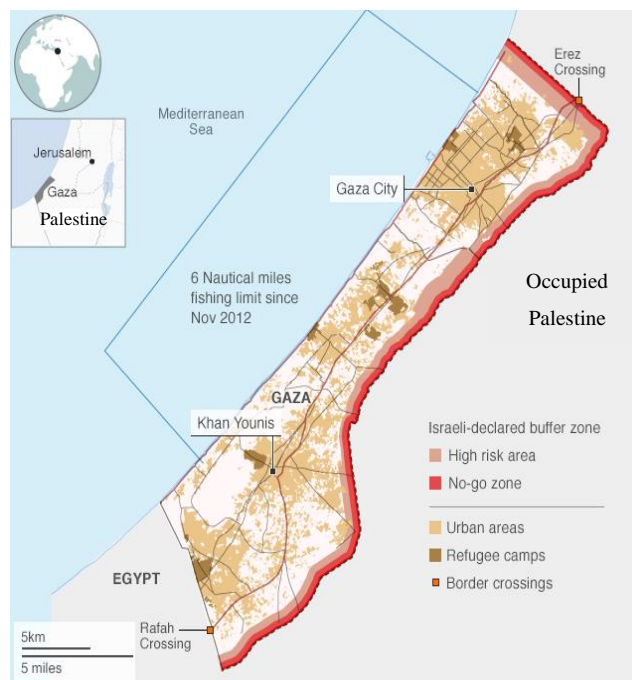
<sup>5</sup> Link of photo: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/palestine/images/palestine-map.gif>

<sup>6</sup> I replaced 'israel' with Palestine and Occupied Palestine on the UN OCHA map (2019)



*Figure 1 Gaza Strip as Part of the Historical Palestine.*

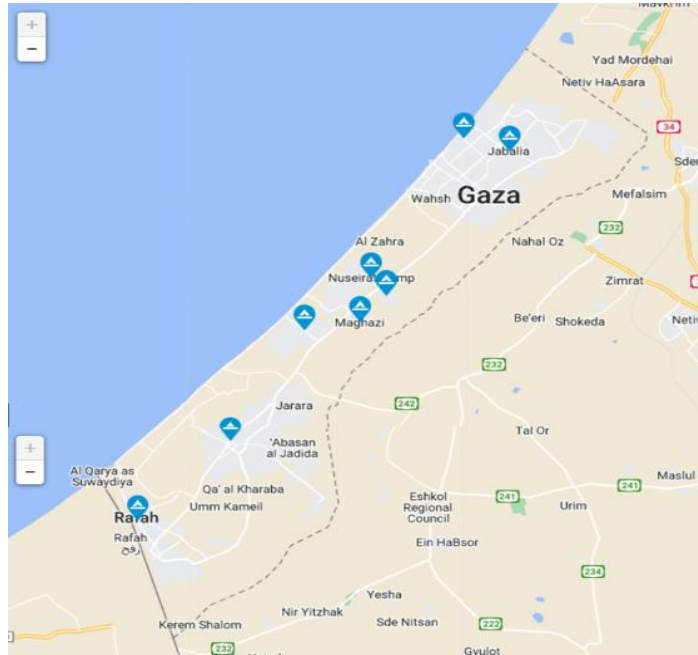
*Source from (Judeh, Haddad, & Özerol, 2017)*



*Figure 2 The Gaza Strip Borders.*

*Source from UN OCHA (2019)*





*Figure 3 Map of the Eight Refugee Camps in the Gaza Strip.*

*Source from UNRWA (2021)*

The current population of the Gaza Strip is approximately 2.1 million inhabitants according to the latest issue of the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) (2022), which makes it one of the most densely populated areas on Earth. This large population goes back to the formation of the refugee camps in the Gaza Strip after what is referred to as “the 1948 Israeli-Arab war” that resulted into the displacement of about 950,000 Palestinian both internally and externally and replacing them with exclusively Jewish settlers to establish what is referred to as ‘Israel’ today.

### 2.5.2 Political situation

The Gaza Strip was administered by three different powers starting from the Egyptian administrative period that took control from 1948 until June 1967. Then, the Israeli occupation claimed power and lasted until April 1994. During this period, the first Intifada, i.e., *uprising*, took place from 1987 to 1994. Then, it was finally the Palestinian period which started in the 1994 until present time.

Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) was held on 25 January 2006 in the Gaza Strip in the presence of the two biggest political parties Fatah and Hamas in 2006. Hamas had a sweeping victory in the elections with a vast majority (Aljazeera, 2006) and ruled the Gaza Strip. Therefore, the Gaza Strip is currently administered by Hamas, one of the two biggest political parties in the Gaza Strip. However, Israel, the United States, and the European Union have not recognized the electoral victory

of Hamas which resulted in imposing sanctions on the Strip and listing Hamas as a terrorist group. Accordingly, a collective punishment took the form of a blockade was imposed on the Gaza Strip since 2006 (Zeidan, 2019) until the date of this paper.

### 2.5.3 Military aggressions on the Gaza Strip

The denial of democratic elections that resulted into the winning of Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas by the United States, the European Union and certainly the occupation state of Israel led to four massive aggressions on the Gaza Strip. The first was in December 2008, which lasted from 27 December 2008 until 19 January 2009 and claimed the lives of 1,440 Palestinians, where 5,380 others were injured (Zanotti et al., 2009). In November 2012, another Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip took place and continued from 14 to 21 November 2012. Its consequences were as follows: 174 Palestinians were killed, and hundreds of persons were injured (OHCHR, 2013). The 2014 aggression was catastrophic and has “shocked and shamed the world,” as the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put it. It lasted for 50 days from 8 July until 26 August 2014 and resulted in the murder of 2,251 Palestinians and the injury of 11,231 (UNRWA, 2019). The fourth military aggression on the Gaza Strip began on 10 May 2021 and lasted for 11 days where 261 Palestinians were killed, and over 2,200 Palestinians were injured (Bachelet, 2022).

### 2.5.4 Education in Palestine

Historically, formal education has been under the control and administration of foreign rule in Palestine. The Palestinian education system has been under the control of the successive colonial external powers, starting from the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, then the British Mandate and afterwards the Israeli occupation (Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006). Every power that claimed control over education over the years shaped their education to serve the maintenance of the status quo. In Turkish language to an overwhelming majority of Arabic speaking Palestinian Population, education started to be provided by the Ottoman Empire in 1517 (Barakat, 2007; Ramahi, 2015). Public education started to be provided in the region in 1869 (Al-Haj, 1995; Mar'i, 1978), but having no curriculum of its own, the Ottoman Empire established a system of elementary and secondary public schools modelled on the French one. The Ottomans translated French text books and adopted the French standards (Yousuf, 1956, as cited in Abu-Saad & Champagne, 2006, p. 1036). The low level of relevance of the education provided as well as having Turkish as the language of instruction rather than Arabic did not succeed in attracting the Palestinian Arab populations to enrol (Al-Haj, 1995; Bowman, 1942).

The aftermath of the Ottoman Empire period in Palestine was defined by two international colonial agreements that established the cornerstone of the geopolitics of Palestine. First, the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916 between French and British colonial powers which partitioned the Middle East into 5 countries, including Palestine, when freed from the Ottoman control. This agreement resulted into Palestine being governed under the direct British mandate. The following year, British foreign minister Arthur Balfour issued the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which against the will of the indigenous Palestinian populations promised to establish a “Jewish national home” in Palestine (Broco & Trad, 2011).

Starting from 1917 during the British rule, education was steered to serve the interests of the ruling power to fill the growing shortage for civil servants for the British Empire. Rather than aiming at advancing the indigenous inhabitants’ social welfare, the sort of education in this phase was associated with power structures and the political elites. It alienated indigenous Palestinians from their own education and focused on improving the individual socio-economic and political interests (Ramahi, 2015).

With the establishment of what is referred to as the state of Israel and the ethnic cleansing of the majority of indigenous Palestinian populations in 1948 in the event that is commonly referred to as “al-Nakba” in Arabic (literally meaning “catastrophe”) (Barham & Akbar, 2022), the Palestinians’ hopes of having an education under their own rule were dashed (Ramahi, 2015). Instead, Palestinian refugees who were forcibly displaced to the neighbouring states in the refugee camps administered by the UN were subject to the curriculum and the educational policies of the hosting states (UNRWA, 2013). In the remaining Palestinian territories, Jordanian national curriculum was effectuated in the West Bank and the Egyptian national curriculum was provided to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip until 1967. As a consequence, the education Palestinian population received both in the occupied Palestinian territories and the diaspora was not concerned with preserving the Palestinian identity and did not support the Palestinian social advancement. Neither did it lay a fertile soil to address Palestinians’ aspirations for liberation and achieving their political independence (Ramahi, 2015). On the contrary, it undermined the aspirations of the Palestinians of maintaining unity in the vision and the purpose to achieve liberation through formal education.

In 1967, Israeli occupation occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip and subjected them, including the education system, to the military rule. Education turned then from bad to worse, as books were censored for containing the word Palestine or referring to the Nakba “Catastrophe” of 1948. Many books were banned from use in educational facilities claiming that they contained subversive material against Israel (Asaad, 2000).

Even though the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO)<sup>7</sup> did not have the operative mechanism or the authoritative means as an official national government, there were several attempts to make up for the decrease of education in that period through newspapers, radio station Sawt Falastin, “The Voice of Palestine,” and periodicals (Khalidi, 1997). These attempts culminated in drafting a document called “educational philosophy of the Arab Palestinian People” by the PLO’s department of education which resulted into publishing and distributing several books in most Palestinian communities in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories (Asaad, 2000).

By the end of 1987, the first *Intifada* (uprising) erupted in occupied Palestine calling for national rights, self-determination and independence from Israeli occupation. During the 1987 intifada, Palestinian education – formal and informal – effectively became illegal casting an enormous catastrophic shadow over education in Palestine in an unprecedented way (Rigby, 1995). During the four following years of the Intifada, the Palestinians’ informal attempts at providing education was intercepted by Israeli systematic closure of schools and universities and Israeli soldiers’ harassment and arrest of students and teachers for participating in education or even for carrying a book (Hussein, 2005). Israeli military rule forcibly closed down schools and universities for what accumulates to two years during the first four years of the Intifada resulting into a disastrous decline in academic standards in the occupied Palestinian territories (Asaad, 2000; Ramahi, 2015).

The following year of the Intifada, specifically in November 1988, the PLO in diaspora declared the Palestinian independence. With this declaration, PLO recognised the UN resolutions 181 concerning the partition of Historical Palestine even though the occupation was still standing. They declared the state of Palestine as “a peace-loving State, in adherence to the principles of peaceful co-existence,” (the declaration of independence, 1988). Armed resistance ceased to be a means for achieving liberation from occupation.

The declaration also established a ground for the education and culture of the future of the declared Palestinian state, “The State of Palestine is the state of Palestinians wherever they may be. The state is for them to enjoy in it their collective national and cultural identity” (the declaration of independence, 1988).

Following a series of discussions with UNESCO started in 1990 requesting financial and organisational support from UNESCO to develop a Palestinian curriculum, *The Palestinian Centre for Development of Curriculum* was established in 1995 in the city of Ramallah to be run by the

---

<sup>7</sup> A Palestinian nationalist political and military organisation that was founded in 1964 where most Palestinian liberation movements had united for the purpose of opposing the Israeli occupation and establishing a Palestinian state.

Palestinian ministry of education in cooperation with UNESCO. This took place one year after the implementation of Oslo agreement in 1994, wherein the Palestinian Authority started to claim authority in areas in the West Bank and Gaza Strip including the ministry of education from the Israeli military rule (Asaad, 2000).

The Palestinian Authority did inherit the educational system from Israeli military rule, but it did not receive the whole package. The structure, regulations and the system remained the same. Only the people in charge were changed. To place any change, cancellation or reform to any of the regulations in operation, the Palestinian Authority had to provide a proposal to the occupation authorities. If the Israelis did not respond within a month of placing the proposal, the changes can be operated. If the occupation authorities object, both parties would go to negotiation (Rigby, 1995).

The year 1996 marked the publishing of the First Palestinian Curriculum for Public Education by the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre in Ramallah (Asaad, 2000). It was not long until it received criticism for shortcomings in the curriculum and notes for reform from the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre in 1997. It did not address the political, economic and social development on the Palestinian level. For instance, the borders of the Palestinian State were not defined by the curriculum because there was no agreement yet and politicians were still negotiating them. In addition to this, the culture represented by the curriculum did not address the Palestinian national spirit. Rather, it promoted that of the Egyptian and Jordanian. The history of Palestine and the 1948 war that resulted into the displacement of Palestinian refugees was a sensitive issue and consequently, was not mentioned in the curriculum. The construction of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital require emphasising relevant Palestinian values (Nasr, 2022).

Pertinent concepts to the Palestinian collective national identity need to be given core emphasis in the Palestinian curriculum. Until the date of this paper, some important concepts are not resolved or discussed in the Palestinian curriculum. Examples of these issues are: Which Palestine to teach? Is it the historical Palestine? Is it the remnants of political agreements with the occupation authorities? Or is it the remnants of settler colonial annexation after political agreements? All these questions are still relevant for the curriculum in use today.

## **2.6 Thesis structure**

This thesis is divided into seven main chapters with the objective to explore the perspectives of a sample of teachers in the Gaza Strip on the role of the curriculum of the elementary stage in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing education as an instrument for liberation. Chapter one is intended to provide the reader with notes of information that I take prerequisite before conducting the research study in addition to my personal motivation to conduct this research. Chapter

two sets an introductory context about the study: a thesis topic is presented, followed by research objective, then the significance of the study, research questions, background on education and context of study area, and the thesis structure. Chapter three examines the concepts and literature pertinent to the current study, where nationalism, identity, education and its relation to politics and national identity and the importance of the curriculum in the educational process are introduced briefly. In chapter four, the theoretical framework of this study is discussed to familiarise the reader with Paulo Freire's critical theory of education used in this study. In this chapter, I define the radical, to whom Freire directed his theory, the banking concept of education, Freire's libertarian solution, the importance of the individual for the community, and I conclude with a summary. Chapter five displays my methodology in conducting the research, where I present and rationalise my selection of method, my methodological approach, scope and delimitation of the study, recruitment of participants, ethical considerations and principles, positionality and the tool I used for the data analysis. My data findings and analysis are presented in chapter six, where I analyse the three themes and their subthemes to answer the two main research questions of the study. Chapter seven concludes my research and gives recommendations for future research.

### 3 Literature review

The following literature review is an attempt to display a brief summary of the key concepts and approaches that might be of help in understanding the discussion around promoting the national identity and providing education for liberation through the school curriculum. The main aim from collecting this brief account of pertinent academic contributions to the research is to explore different approaches orbiting key concepts of identity, nationalism, national identity, the role of education in state-building and education for liberation.

#### 3.1 Identity, nationalism and national identity

The concept of identity in its current usage is relatively recent and can be traced to the works of the German-American developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erik Erikson in the 1950s. The term received interest in everyday discourse and in many disciplines of social science by the 1970s. In the late 1980s and 1990s, historians, anthropologists and scholars of humanities depended abundantly on identity following the influence of postmodernists.<sup>8</sup> They explored social categories such as the cultural politics of race, ethnicity, class, citizenship and gender. Class, race and gender were the cornerstone of literary criticism as viewed of a literary historian in the eighties (Appiah & Gates, 1995; Fearon, 1999). But what is the definition of identity as a concept and consequently, what is national identity?

##### 3.1.1 Identity: between usage and definition

Stuart Hall (1989) views identity as a space that cannot be resolved. He presents identity as an ongoing process of self-exploration that stems from the relationship between the Self and the Other:

Identity emerges as a kind of unsettled space, or an unresolved question in that space, between a number of intersecting discourses. ... Identity is a process, identity is split. Identity is not a fixed point but an ambivalent point. Identity is also the relationship of the Other to oneself.  
(p. 198)

The scope of the definition of identity mesmerisingly differs from a scholar to another in academia. Whereas Hall highlights the often-changing feature of identity, Taylor (1989) accents the personal characteristic of *his* identity:

---

<sup>8</sup> See Mackenzie's "*Political Identity*" (1978); and, Gleason's "*Identifying Identity: A Semantic History*" (1983).

My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. (p. 27)

However, his take on identity is not limited to this short statement. In fact, after dedicating a number of pages attempting to display what he means by identity in his “*The Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*”, he continues, “but in fact our identity is deeper and more many-sided than any of our possible articulations of it” (Taylor 1989, p. 29). Identity is a slippery concept. It emphasises both sameness and difference (Al Ramiah, Hewstone & Schmid, 2011). In his article titled “*What is Identity (as we now use the word)?*”, James Fearon (1999), argues that the term “identity” as a concept remains somewhat enigmatic and rather complicated. He posits that identity is a recent social construct that even though everyone is capable of using it in everyday discourse, the dictionary definitions fail to provide an adequate definition that reflects its meaning as we use it today but rather reflect an older connotation of the concept. However, Fearon attempts to formulate a brief statement of the meaning of the term in light of its present use in most academic writings in two linked senses, social and personal. The social boundary of the term suggests a social category where a group of people share a set of, *allegedly*, distinguished attributes, characteristics, or expected behaviours and rules to decide their membership. The personal identity serves to highlight the characteristics that distinguish the person from others and to which the person feels particularly proud for having and views as unchangeable. In the latter sense, it resembles the dignity where it points out the individual self-respect.

### 3.1.2 Nationalism and national identity

Even though nationalism has provided a significant influence on the modern world, plausible theory about it or a universal consensus on what exactly constitutes it are notably deficient. As Anderson summarises “Nation, nationality, nationalism — all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse” (2006, p. 3). Hugh Seton-Watson (1977), inheritor to an immense tradition of liberal historiography and social science and author of one of the most comprehensive English-language text on nationalism, describes, “thus I am driven to the conclusion that no *scientific definition* of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists” (p. 5, emphasis added). However, some scholars attempted to define nation and nationalism. Benedict Anderson (2006) proposes a definition of the nation from an anthropological spirit, “it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 6). He clarifies that it is imagined because it is not a possibility that a member of a nation, regardless of how small the nation could be, knows most of his/her fellow-members, yet the members consider in their minds, and



consequently behave, as though they form a nation. In other words, nationalism suggests that a group of people having common characteristics that, in their beliefs, distinguish them from others should be politically autonomous. Nation as a term constitutes one of the most crucial forms of collective identity in modern communities. There are several possible factors the people of a community share that constitute this feeling of oneness or the sentiment of a nation. Smith (1991) gives examples of some sort of characteristics people might share to form this sentiment of nationhood, for instance, language, ethnicity, religion, historic territory, culture, economy, legal rights and duties. The term “nation” has often been used interchangeably with the term “state” in many contexts, but in fact they are two different concepts. A state is more of a territorial entity that can be referred to as an administrative unit where the power and the political institution of the state require loyalty of the people in the governed territory, while a nation refers to a different entity. For instance, states usually seek to foster the sentiment of a nation in their territorial entity to consolidate legitimacy and strengthen governance (Yuen & Mok, 2014). This clarifies that the base the concept of the state relies on is quite clear if compared with the vague base of the concept of the nation.

National identity is positioned among numerous social identities, including, inter alia, territorial, racial, religious and linguistic identities (Ashmore & Jussim, 1997). Al Ramiah, Hewstone, & Schmid (2011) clarify that national identity has an affective dimension where people who share the same national identity have the feeling of proximity to one another, psychological belonging to their own country and pride of its symbols. Many scholars today distinguish between two types of affective love of one’s own country or nationality and the expression of one’s national identity. One has a positive connotation, i.e., *patriotism*, which is generally used to describe positive sentiments, attitudes or actions encompassing serving the interest of all people of the country. This type often embeds defensive connotations in the case of resisting an occupation for instance. The other expression of national identity is characterised of being extreme and is referred to by *chauvinism*. This encompasses extreme loyalty to one’s country and a firm belief of the country’s superiority over other countries, often leads to offensive consequences against groups or individuals of other identities (Ashmore, Jussim, & Wilder, 2001).

Therefore, national identity in its moderate, positive connotation is equally important both for the state, and for the individuals. Pulitzer Prize-winning historian Anne Applebaum argues, “we’re coming to the period where people want to argue over something more existential [than economics], about national identity, about who they are” (Croucher, 2018, p. 4). But who shapes the national identity and what constructs the national identity for states or groups?

## **3.2 Education, policies and national identity**

Education and the process of forming education philosophy cannot be separated from politics. In fact, they are issues of political and social struggle among the ruling elite that is characterised and driven by interests. Education, including philosophy, school curriculum and the process of education, is often used as a tool by the power structure and the ruling hegemony to shape, produce, reproduce and reform the identity, and consequently, future of the society and the individuals to serve the purpose they establish for themselves and the society they rule (Freire & Shor, 1987). In his description of the inseparable relationship between education and politics, Shor (1996, as cited in Asaad, 2000) proposes that education is in its “essence political because the education process is a meeting place between man and society. Education is a joint development for society and the individuals in it, and the future of both is shaped in an educational process” (p. 26).

It is the responsibility of the political government to maintain and protect the national identity in balance against the claims of other group identities. In fact, political governments have the power of identifying and shaping the identity for their nations. Massimo d’Azeglio, a famous Italian politician and a pioneer of Italian unification, gave an example of how a nation state and a nation are brought to life. He said at the first meeting of the parliament of the newly united Italian kingdom, “we have made Italy, now we have to make Italians” (Hobsbawm, 1992, p. 44). As Shvets (2020) states that ‘state elites made nations happen’, Veronika Bajt (2010) declares: ‘In order to create an idea of national identity and common destiny of the nation, the state power determines which version of the past is hegemonic and invests into building a shared national identity through marginalizing or removing different’ (p.141).

It has to be acknowledged that elites and the political state, or political government play a crucial role in the process of forming the national identity and for this, they use the various available tools they possess to establish, preserve, [reform] and reconstruct their concept of their national identity. Among the available tools for the state to achieve this rises the role of education. In this regard, across history, education has been one of the major platforms to establish, preserve and promote national identity (Shvets, 2020). To illustrate, in China for instance, the highest levels of the Chinese state authorities govern education of citizenship. Therefore, Marxism-Leninism guides and promotes the main themes in the Chinese curriculum (Man Chong, 2012).

## **3.3 Education and national identity**

According to Shvets (2020), the state and elites have a crucial role in forming national identity. They ‘establish, maintain, and reconstruct the notion of national identity’ (p. 122).

Afterwards, they use certain platforms to introduce it to their people, the most important of which is education. Therefore, the educational system could be used to promote new policies the state needs to build national identity. The importance of children's education in forming national identity stems from the fact that young children are in a continual process of developing identity (Diaz, 2017). Therefore, Shvets (2020) and Man Chong (2012) argue that all over the world and throughout history, educational systems are used to foster national identity and its most important objective is to cultivate loyalty of citizens to a nation. This way, national education could shape the mind of the recipients to put the nation first (Shvets, 2020). This could be called 'nationalistic indoctrination' which Shvets (2020) and Bajt (2010) find dangerous. "It limits people in their decision making, limits their thinking itself. The existence of the state-endorsed dominant historical perspective and the unique right of elites to shape these perspectives may lead to tragic consequences" (Shvets, 2020, p. 129-130).

Hewitt (2006) refers to curriculum in a world of nations as a political tool. It is used as a means to organise society and construct loyalty to it. He argues that curriculum is an essential part of nation building that possess the capacity to create unity, conformity and practices of civic duty. Ideas about the aim and use of education is included in the agenda of any particular political party or interest group. Schools in this understanding are used as channels to enforce these ideas through curriculum development and policy making.

### **3.4 Importance of the curriculum in the educational process**

The curriculum plays a crucial role in the learning process and is considered a decisive factor of the provision of quality education. It provides a content to support the educational process that aims at ensuring a holistic development for children (Stabback, 2016). The curriculum provides the foundation for students' learning experiences as well as the acquisition of knowledge for learners throughout their education. According to Priestley and Philippou (2019), the curriculum is the centre of any learning or educational institution.

Curriculum is significant in the educational process (Lopes & Pereira, 2012; Hong, 2012; Haning, 2020). It is important for both the teaching and the learning processes; for both the teachers and the students, and it affects both. Lopes & Pereira (2012) believe that the curriculum is important since it is considered as a reference for both teachers and students, and it has an impact on the students' learning process and on the educational process as a whole. Hong (2012) posits that the curricula is important for the learning development and skill development of the students.

Curriculum is a basis for what students learn, what skills they are expected to gain, and what they need for their learning development (Hong, 2012; Lopes & Pereira, 2012; Haning, 2020). According to Haning (2020), the curriculum reveals how a particular institution chooses to shape its

students' knowledge, skills, and educational experiences by the curriculum they provide. In other words, what is delivered to the students is what the curriculum designers prioritise and believe is valuable for the students. Being a source for students' learning, curriculum helps form students' identities (Haning, 2020; Lopes & Pereira, 2012). Lopes & Pereira (2012) state that "curriculum is a document of identity and identity is an expression/manifestation of a curriculum" (p.19).

In addition to that, curriculum is important for the teachers as it provides them with the resources and the information needed to support students' learning (Lopes & Pereira, 2012). It affects the teacher's teaching process as teachers deliver what is relevant i.e., what is included in the curriculum; therefore, it influences the formation of the teacher's as well as students' identity (Haning, 2020).

### **3.5 Summary**

In the literature review provided in this chapter, it is found that national identity and state identity are almost overlapping terms that are often used interchangeably whereas some scholars cite slight differences between them. It can also be found that nationalism and identity are loose terms and that national identity is not a term that everyone that comes in agreement on what it encompasses. Therefore, this study does not attempt to explore what the Palestinian national identity is to the interviewed sample, neither does it attempt to provide a norm on what the Palestinian national identity is. Rather, it attempts to explore the perspectives of the elementary school teachers of a variety of subjects on the role the Palestinian curriculum they teach at the elementary stage plays in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education as an instrument for liberation. The answers of the teachers on their perspectives of the role of the curriculum is based on their understanding on what the Palestinian national identity is and what liberation means to them.

Furthermore, the literature presented in this chapter confirms that the power structure and the political elites through education shape the national identity of the state. Finally, the importance of the curriculum in the educational process was highlighted to emphasise the significance of the curriculum in deciding the national identity through education.

## 4 Theoretical framework

In order to connect the discussion of the Palestinian elementary school curriculum as an instrument for liberation and for the construction of national identity from the perspectives of teachers with existing knowledge relevant to this topic, it is inevitable to consider researching the already existing theories that clarify the issues under investigation. Using a Freirean theoretical framework within this study, I aim at providing my research with the foundation that will support my analysis and help me interpret my findings.

This research takes from Paulo Freire's *critical theory of education* in Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) as a theoretical framework. The leading Brazilian educator and philosopher is best known for the theory of liberation, which he developed through his work as a teacher and activist in Brazil and other Latin American countries. He was born in 1921 to middle-class parents in Recife, Brazil. He reflected on the difficulty he faced in his childhood education saying that he had the motivation to study, but his economic condition did not allow him to, "I tried to read or pay attention in the classroom, but I didn't understand anything because of my hunger" (Gadotti & Milton, 1994, p. 5). The most renowned of Freire's publications was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), in which he proposes the moral potential in a transformative education, i.e., the potential to liberate. The profound impact Freire's views have made were not limited to the field of education, but also in the overall struggle for liberation. The pedagogy of the oppressed critically manifests and reflects on the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, the oppressor and the oppressed. It even evokes, by reflection, the fragility of the oppressed who themselves become oppressors, misguided by their conception of their role while (mis-)leading the revolutionary actions against the oppressor (Freire, 2000).

### 4.1 A task for radicals

Pedagogy of the oppressed is a task for radicals to recover their lost humanity by the yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice. The critical theory of education Freire (2000) proposes is an emancipatory one that is grounded in the belief that all individuals possess the capacity to think critically and challenge the dominant ideologies and power structures that shape their lives. Freire (2000) declares it early at his work that his contribution is for radicals and clarifies what it means to be radical as well as the significance of being radical, not sectarian or fanatic, for the purpose of the removal of oppression and consequently for the achievement of liberation:

Sectarianism, fed by fanaticism, is always castrating. Radicalization, nourished by a critical spirit, is always creative. Sectarianism mythicizes and thereby alienates; radicalization

criticizes and thereby liberates. Radicalization involves increased commitment to the position one has chosen, and thus ever greater engagement in the effort to transform concrete, objective reality. Conversely, sectarianism, because it is mythicizing and irrational, turns reality into a false (and therefore unchangeable) "reality." Sectarianism in any quarter is an obstacle to the emancipation of mankind. (Freire, 2000, p. 37)

The radical is committed to human liberation and is free from imprisoned reality. It is vital to be radical because the more radical the person is, the more aware he or she is of the reality. This awareness of the reality is not limited to being able to understand it, but also to being able to better transform it. This person has the capacity to confront, to listen, to see the world uncovered. This individual is not intimidated to interact with people or engage into dialogue with them (Freire, 2000). "This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side" (Freire, 2000, p. 39). Thus, the radical in Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is an individual who is willing to engage himself or herself into dialogue, into perceiving the world around, into co-creating knowledge and into transforming his or her life and the lives of the society.

## 4.2 Banking concept of education

Traditional education systems are incapable of nurturing radicals. Therefore, Freire believes that education is not merely a means of transmitting knowledge from teacher to student, but also an instrument for promoting social change where individuals are empowered not only to gain knowledge about their reality, but also to transform their lives and the societies in which they live. Traditional education systems, according to Freire, have a tendency to be oppressive in nature, as they fortify the status quo and prioritise the interests of the ruling hegemony. The traditional educational process is characterised with authoritarianism and therefore, it necessarily involves two parties, a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). Freire posits that education is suffering from *narration sickness*. The narration Freire describes symbolises oppression where the oppressors indoctrinate people (the oppressed) to adapt to a reality which must remain untouched. This indoctrination turns students into an empty vessel to be filled by the teacher. The more these "containers" are filled, the better the teacher is and the more submissive these "receptacles" are, the better students they are. He named this concept of education the "banking" concept where the teacher is the depositor of information and the students are the depositories. Students in the banking concept of education have a limited scope of action, where they only receive, file and store the deposits. In the best cases, this system, according to Freire, is a misguided one as it lacks creativity, transformation and knowledge. The narration in this monotonous one-way educational process makes any content

lifeless and alienating because it lacks interaction and dialogue. It imposes a content that presents a one-sided aspect of reality, the sort of reality the ruling hegemony wants them to see and mechanically memorise. Freire argues that the traditional oppressive education treats students as passive recipients of knowledge. The person in this banking concept is a person *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others. The banking concept makes the individual a spectator, not a re-creator. Freire clarifies, “the person is not a conscious being (*corpo consciente*); he or she is rather the possessor of a consciousness: an empty “mind” passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside” (Freire, 2000, p. 75).

### **4.3 Lifeless and alienating content**

Any sort of content of this education system, whether values or empirical aspects of reality, becomes lifeless and petrified in the process of being narrated. In the oppressive banking concept of education, the learner is considered to be an empty vessel and knowledge is a present gifted by the ones who consider themselves knowledgeable to these empty vessels. The content of this type of education varies to fit the ideologies and interests of the power structure and the ruling elites (the providers of this oppressive education), rather than directing the education to fit the needs of the society and the learners, i.e., an education that liberates and shapes a radical, active and creative participant. An oppressive education system tends to provide a content that alienates learners and detaches them from their reality, resulting into projecting absolute ignorance onto others. This is a characteristic of the ideology of oppression that goes against education and knowledge as processes of inquiry.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration— contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated, and alienating verbosity. (Freire, 2000, p. 71)

The teacher in Freire’s text embodies the system, the ideology of the oppressive ruling power, and the content of the curriculum, not the teacher per se. As a consequence, the content presented in this process is detached from reality. This content is alienated from what gives meaning to students and therefore, is alienating them from their oppressive reality. Instead of working on changing the situation which oppresses the oppressed, the oppressors focus their interests in changing the consciousness of the oppressed. The oppressors believe that the more they can lead the oppressed to adjust to the situation of oppression, the more easily the oppressors can dominate the oppressed.

Therefore, the oppressors exert all the efforts in all the possible mechanisms, directly and indirectly, to detach the oppressed from their lived reality and to control them to adjust to the situation of oppression they lead them into.

#### **4.4 Freire's libertarian solution**

To defy the fundamentally narrative nature of the teacher-student relationship, Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed advocates creating a dialogical relationship between teachers and students. With this dialogical relationship, democracy can be achieved where both parties are treated as equals and work collaboratively to create knowledge together. Freire clarifies that oppression is functionally domesticating. It turns the oppressed into an object, a *thing*, that has no purpose except that the oppressor prescribes for them. By following the prescriptions of the oppressors, the oppressed remain unconscious of the causes of their oppressive situation and thus, they accept being exploited. Therefore, Freire proposes how one can no longer be a victim to its force. His proposal of how to eject oneself from the causes of oppression is by emerging from oppression and turning upon it where reflection and action are the only means of the praxis to transform the world and stop oppression.

It is only when the oppressed find the oppressor out and become involved in the organized struggle for their liberation that they begin to believe in themselves. This discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection: only then will it be a praxis. (Freire, 2000, p. 65)

In Freire's critical theory of education, the struggle starts when the oppressed recognise that they have been destroyed. The recognition is important because as long as the oppressed do not recognise the oppression they live under, they will remain caught with their unauthentic view of the world, which is controlled by the oppressors. The only effective instrument for liberation, according to Freire (2000), is a humanising pedagogy where a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed is established by the revolutionary leadership. Without the dialogue, the oppressed will continue to be perceived as semi-humans and any attempt to treat people as semi-humans only dehumanises them. Freire here emphasises that liberation as a human phenomenon can only be achieved by humans and any method employed to liberate the oppressed that does not perceive them as humans will fall in the trap of dehumanising them.

#### **4.5 The individual as a starting point for the collective**

One of the most crucial elements of Freire's critical theory of education in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed is that it addresses the individual; the individual that oppresses and the individual that is oppressed, the education that liberates, and the education that shapes the radical, active and creative



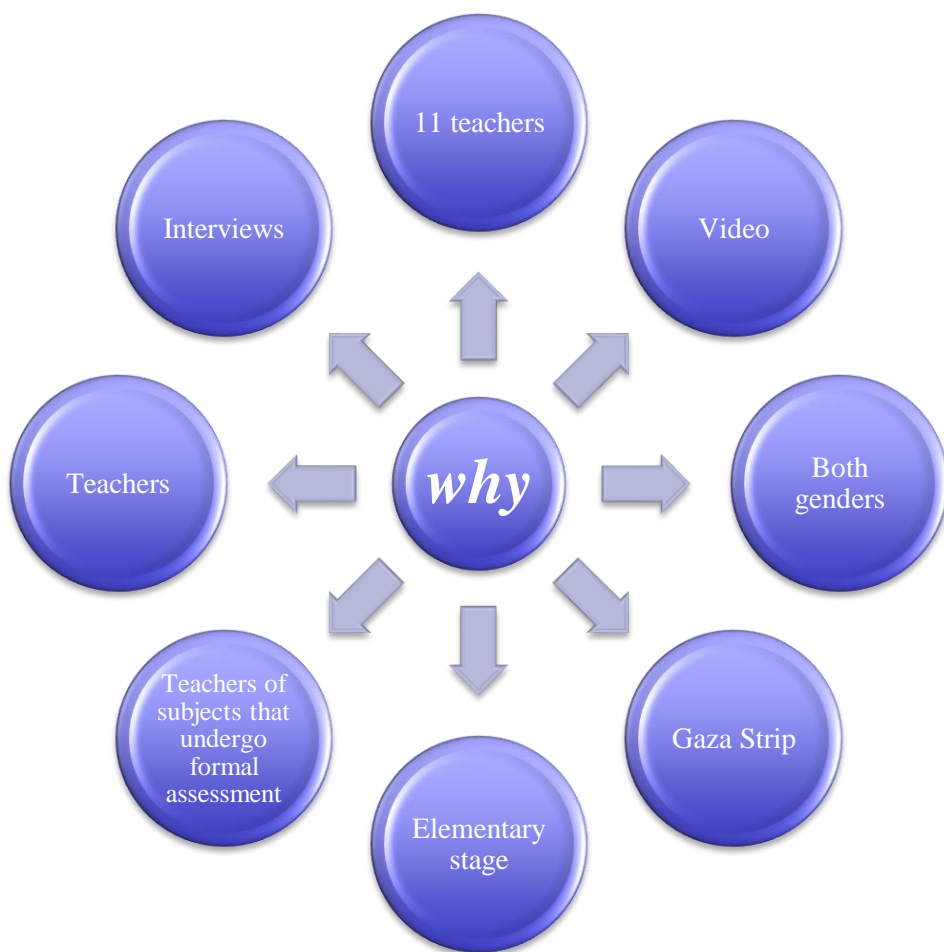
individual participant. Meanwhile, the objective of this study is to check the role of the curriculum in shaping and consolidating the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education for liberation. Speaking about a “Palestinian national identity” is speaking about a shared identity, which indicates a group rather than the individual. Likewise, checking the role of the curriculum as an instrument for liberation indicates the collective rather than the individual that Freire is most concerned with. As the topic under discussion with teachers in this paper addresses the education from a collective national perspective, the theory Freire establishes to the structures of society refers to the individual as a point of departure for social change. To clarify, Freire postulates in his pedagogy of autonomy (1996) that the process of obtaining freedom of individuals is the trigger of the process of liberating a society. Therefore, the individual and the collective are not disconnected in this context. This is because shaping the individual who is a creative and active learner and who participates in creating knowledge with everyone around is the basic element and an integral part in creating a community that shares mutual aspiration for liberation, a community that is free from inside, one that is equipped with the historical tools and the mutual collective aspiration for liberation and seeks freedom. In other words, an education that gives emphasis on liberating the individual is the starting point to achieve an education that promotes “a collective” national identity and one that “collectively” liberates.

## **4.6 Summary**

From Freire’s emphasis on the importance of reflecting on oppression and taking actions to transform this reality of oppression, it is inferred that through education, showing rejection of this oppression and transforming this rejection into action of resistance is vital and is probably one of the most influential and effective forms of resistance. Freire portrays the teacher as the all-knowing element of the process of education. The teacher chooses the program content and presents himself to his students as their opposite. He justifies his significance to them by considering their ignorance absolute. Freire describes the students as slaves by their acceptance of their ignorance. The teacher in Freire’s text symbolises the system and the power structure that govern the educational process, which governs and enslaves the teacher himself. Freire proposes a libertarian education that is based on democracy and dialogue where the two poles of the educational process, i.e., the teacher and the student, learn from each other and co-create the knowledge together instead of having one pole dominating and oppressing the other.

## 5 Research Methodology

This chapter introduces the methodology implemented in this research. In this chapter, I present the data collection method, the recruitment of participants and the epistemological foundation of conducting this social research. This research adopts a theoretical framework from Paulo Freire's critical theory of education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000). Semi-structured interviews are carried out with a sample of elementary school teachers of all the subjects that undergo formal assessment. The scope of the study is limited to teachers in the Gaza Strip. This chapter provides a rationale for my selection of methodology among the alternatives to conduct this study. In this chapter, I attempt to clarify what I used for conducting this research as well as to rationalise why to every choice I made, as illustrated in figure 4. In addition to discussing the data collection method and the rationale, the chapter also clarifies the method of data analysis of this research as thematic content analysis is utilised. Furthermore, positionality, ethical considerations, limitations and participant recruitment are displayed throughout this chapter under the relevant subtitles.



*Figure 4 Questions to be answered in the chapter*

Since the aim of this study is to explore the role of the Palestinian school curriculum in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education for liberation among students of the elementary stage, there was a growing need to think wisely and thoroughly about each step to select appropriate methodology for data collection and data analysis. In this chapter, the motives behind the selection of various tools are displayed. The careful selection of these tools helps in obtaining relevant and valid input to lay the ground for accurate and precise findings that help in answering the research questions.

## **5.1 Selection of method**

There are presumably, *inter alia*, two possible tools to investigate the issue of the role of the Palestinian school curriculum of the elementary stage in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education for liberation. The first possible approach is the analysis of the text of the school curriculum. This method is based on analysing the content of the textbooks and measuring it against one of the theoretical frameworks, which are characterised of being diverse and sometimes somewhat feuding. Indeed, I did not select to conduct the text analysis in this paper. The aim of selecting not to use the text analysis as a research methodology in this paper is to attempt to get objective findings away from potential bias from my side as a researcher, as it would be possible for me as a researcher to choose a theory that supports and gives evidence of predetermined assumptions or beliefs.

The second possible method from my point of view is to interview people and hear from them. The intention of this paper is not to check the conformity of the curriculum with a certain nationalist theory. However, it is to survey whether the curriculum is designed in a way to provide a sufficient source of input to promote the Palestinian national identity and to provide an education for liberation. This can be found from the people to whom the curriculum is designed to serve. Therefore, I favour interacting with the human target to whom the textual means, *i.e.*, the text of the curriculum, is designed to educate. The human target in this sense is the school children who are educated using this curriculum. However, since the school children of the elementary stage are not developed enough in terms of their cognitive ability and their intellectual repertoire to evaluate the efficiency of the curriculum in promoting their national identity, I tried to find an equivalent alternative to replace the school children. In my selection of the alternative, I based my choice of an alternative on two important qualities: first, to share the quality of being directly involved in the educational process of children; and second, to possess the quality of having extensive acquaintance and interaction with the school curriculum. Hence, I choose to interview a sample of teachers in the elementary stage in the Gaza Strip.

## 5.2 Data collection: Qualitative interviews

Considering the nature of this research, a qualitative research approach was chosen, focusing on analysing and interpreting the data that is gathered through views, perceptions, and experiences of research participants. Unlike quantitative research, which relies on variables and numerical expressions, qualitative research delves into real-world experiences, cultural elements, and societal values (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2009; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2016; Yin, 2011). The qualitative approach of research methodology has the potentiality of giving an in-depth understanding of the role of the curriculum in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education for liberation from the teachers' perspective. There are a variety of qualitative methods developed to serve as means of collecting data to get an extensive understanding of the studied issue in the research, the most common of which are interviewing and observation. According to Bryman (2012), the aim in the social research interview is that the interviewer elicits from the respondent information concerning the interviewees' beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviour or the behaviour of others. Oakley (1998) and Jamshed (2014) explain that a qualitative interview is a sort of framework where practices and standards are achieved, challenged and reinforced, not only recorded. Jamshed (2014), argues that no research interview is short of structure; research interviews are either in-depth, semi structured or lightly structured. Bryman (2012) differentiates between two main styles of qualitative interviewing depending on the approach taken by the interviewer. The *unstructured type* of interviews, which tends to resemble a conversation where none of the questions are predetermined in topic or order and the interviewer uses an *aide-memoire* "written notes to help in remembering" to provide himself or herself with prompts. The respondent in this type of interview is given much freedom, with the interviewer just responding to important points. The second of the two main types of interviews that Bryman lists is the *semi-structured interview*. The researcher in this type has a list of predetermined questions, but also has the possibility to ask further unplanned questions to follow up with points mentioned by the interviewee. If I were to label these two types of qualitative interviews, I would label the former with the almost totally *free* type and the latter with the *flexible* type.

My research questions guide my selection of the research methodology in this study. My research questions require analysis of teachers' perceptions of the curriculum in relation to promoting national identity and to provide an education for liberation according to their subjective views and experiences. I have selected qualitative methodology for the study guided by the following research questions of the study:

1. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum as an instrument for liberation?

2. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum in shaping Palestinian national identity?

Both of my research questions are based on the perception of Palestinian teachers from the Gaza Strip; my first question discusses the views of the teachers on the curriculum as an instrument for liberation, whereas the second question explores the teachers' views on the role of the curriculum in shaping and promoting Palestinian national identity. The free type of interviews might not be the most convenient for this study as it is important to keep the relevance to the main topic. For this reason, I decided to adopt the flexible semi-structured interview format. To avoid the risk that the informants' responses be framed or constrained by my preconceptions, my choice of in-depth semi-structured interview format is to encourage the teachers to answer a list of general and open-ended questions. In addition, the teachers are encouraged to share their points of view on any issues they think are important to understand the main research question.

In order to facilitate the process of conducting the interviews and collecting the relevant data to answer the main research question, I developed an interview guide containing the following questions:

- What are the geographical boundaries of Palestine in the perception of the interviewed teachers?
- Does what the curriculum presents go in conformity with the teachers' perception?
- What are the most important characteristics that demarcate the Palestinian national identity? Is it presented in the curriculum taught? How?
- What is the perception of the interviewed teachers of the Israeli occupation? Do they recognise it as a neighbouring state? Is this issue tackled by the curriculum? If yes, how?

### **5.3 Sampling**

This study explores the role of the Palestinian curriculum in constructing and promoting Palestinian national identity as well as in providing an education for liberation. The two main study questions are concerned with teachers' perception of the role of the curriculum in providing students with the relevant education. Therefore, the age during which children start to receive and construct their conception about national identity and formulate their personality is key in the study. In a number of studies conducted by the University of Surrey to explore the development of the subjective sense of national identity, it was found that the importance of national identity for children increases significantly between the age of 5 and 11 years. Likewise, the children's acquisition of national geographical knowledge positively correlates with their sense of national identity (Barrett, 2000). These findings imply that the development of national identity with children is influenced by, but not

solely dependent on, the cognitive development of children that helps them better conceptualise the social world around them. However, the development of children's understanding of national identity is also influenced by the sociocultural settings within which the children are growing. The school system in Palestine is divided into three stages: elementary, preparatory and secondary. The elementary stage starts from grade 1 to and including grade 6, which includes the ages from 6 years to 11 years. The preparatory, often referred to "prep," stage extends for three years to contain students of 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades. The final stage is the secondary, which continues the final three school grades of 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup>. As the elementary stage contains students in the age that falls within the years when children develop their perception and awareness of their national identity that Barrett (2000) suggests from 5 to 11 years of age, my selection of the stage fell on the elementary stage Palestinian school curriculum.

There are many approaches for selecting participants, and the type of sampling depends on the way the information will be used. In addition, the selection of samples alters depending on the type of information the researcher attempts to collect to answer the questions the research poses (Bryman, 2016). I managed to interview 11 elementary school teachers of all assessable subjects. Whereas all school subjects can be studied in relation with the promotion of national identity for children as they all can provide valuable reference to national identity and they all can form a basis to explore the liberation through them, my selection fell on the subjects that receive formal assessment by the end of each semester and with which students get credit from them in their certificate of achievements. There are three subjects that either do not receive formal assessment like Physical Education, or receive formal assessment but students do not credit from them like Arts and Crafts, and Technology Education. This can be demonstrated by the minimal number of classes students receive in these subjects every week, (see table 1).

Subject	Grade and number of classes every week					
	First grade	Second grade	Third grade	Fourth grade	Fifth grade	Sixth grade
Religious education	3	3	3	3	4	4
Arabic language	11	11	9	9	8	8
English language	3	3	3	3	4	4
Mathematics	7	7	6	6	5	5
Science and life	0	0	3	3	4	4
National and life education	2	2	0	0	0	0
National and social upbringing	0	0	2	2	0	0
Socials	0	0	0	0	3	3
Technology education	0	0	0	0	2	2
Arts and crafts	1	1	1	1	1	1
Physical education	1	1	1	1	1	1

*Table 1 Revised study plan – Ministry of Education & Higher Education, General Directorate of Planning & Development (2022 / 2023)*

My interest in interviewing teachers, not parents for instance or curriculum authors, stems from the particularity the teachers possess, which others lack per se, of being in direct and daily contact with both the children as well as the school curriculum. In addition to having a first-hand experience of numerous learning situations where school children are likely to articulate their perception of their national identity, teachers are there to reflect and evaluate which areas the curriculum lacks. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) establishes a

basis that everyone has the right to education and in the third paragraph, it declares: “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children” (United Nations, 1948, art. 26.3). Subsequently, teachers can also be parents of their own children. That being the case, they combine between being teachers who have direct interaction with school children and the curriculum, as well as being parents to their own children. In other word, by interviewing teachers, I can have the view of an expert in the curriculum taught and a parent who cares about what his or her children learn. Therefore, I assume that the most authentic data can be collected from teachers.

## **5.4 Scope and delimitation of the study**

Bryman (2012) problematises generalisation in qualitative research. He argues that the case study as well as the interviewed participants are not necessarily a representative of the population. Therefore, there is a need to define the boundaries that specify the objectives of the research. This study focuses on exploring the role the curriculum plays in promoting Palestinian national identity as well as its role in providing an education for liberation through the elementary stage. To illustrate, the current research paper does not cover the role of the teacher or what happens in the classroom; rather, it aims at studying the curriculum from the perspective of the teachers who teach it. The data is gathered from 11 teachers of different subjects who teach or have taught at the elementary stage in the Gaza Strip. The interviews took place online with 11 teachers during the first month of 2023. The study is limited to the views of a sample of teachers from the Gaza Strip and does not contain views of teachers in the West Bank even though they use the same curriculum. However, due to my inability to connect myself with teachers in the West Bank and my lack of the information about the context of education in the West Bank, I limited the boundaries of my study to the Gaza Strip. Also, the current study only covers the teachers’ perspectives on the elementary school curriculum away from the curriculum of the preparatory and secondary stages.

## **5.5 Recruitment of participants**

The participants in this study were recruited through random snowball sampling recruitment technique (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). Being a teacher myself, I have a community of teachers from both genders. However, most of my teaching experience was in the preparatory stage, not the elementary stage. Initially, I tried to reach out to participants through my social media platforms, where I wrote that I need teachers of elementary stage to participate in a study about the curriculum they teach. All the respondents who expressed their willingness to participate were teachers of English. This was understandable for me since my network of teachers is mostly teachers of English. Most of the teachers who expressed their willingness to participate were female teachers. In the recruitment



process, I made an effort to maintain transparency and impartiality by refraining from hiring individuals who were my acquaintances or had previously worked with me. This was feasible for me because, for the majority of my career as an educator, I taught at the preparatory level rather than at the elementary level. While interviewing participants, I was looking for other participants who teach different subjects for different grades, so benefited from the participants both by the input they provided and by their help in recruiting other participants.

I aimed at recruiting teachers of different subjects who teach different grades in the elementary school. My main criteria were to cover all the subjects assessable in the elementary stage and all the grades, to recruit teachers from both genders and to avoid recruiting friends. I succeeded in meeting all the criteria I drew for my research. The scope of the sample was also taken into account, where all the participants are teachers who teach in the Gaza Strip.

The process of recruiting participants was challenging and stressful as I initially thought that it would be an easy process first. However, the fear of participants from being dismissed from employment when they learned about the topic of the research hindered the process of recruitment. Some participants who were suggested dismissed their interest in participation from the beginning, while others refused to participate when they learned about the topic. One of the participants agreed to participate and were sent the information letter and consent form via email and we set an appointment for the interview, but when I contacted her after preparing all the arrangement for the interview, the participant sent a message refusing to participate due because “the UNRWA imposes a policy of neutrality on us.” It was stressful and challenging for me, especially that I struggled to find participants and the time was limited. However, I adhered to the research ethics by replying to the participant expressing my understanding and thanked the participant.

My initial plan was to recruit from 9 to 12 participants depending on receiving data that answer my research questions. Some interviews were more informative and resourceful than others. However, all the interviews contributed in providing an insight for the analysis of data and in drawing the conclusions. By the end of the interview process, I received my data from a sample of 11 teachers.

## **5.6 Ethical considerations**

When conducting research involving human subjects, several ethical principles should be considered. Thus, this research notifies the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) and is performed in line with Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH). According to NESH (2022), researchers are responsible for all human subjects involved in the study. Researchers should maintain confidentiality, respect the participants privacy, and ensure

their safety. It is a principle that participants are involved based on the informed consents they provide (NESH, 2022, p.18).

The participants in this study were recruited through random snowball recruitment (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) and reached out initially through social media and teachers' communities in Gaza. Although I belong to the same social group as my participants being a Palestinian from Gaza, and a teacher, I tried to be transparent and neutral in the recruitment process by avoiding recruiting friends and people who worked with me. This was possible for me because most of my teaching career, I have been teaching in the preparatory stage not the elementary.

Based on NESH (2022), participants should provide voluntary, informed, unambiguous, and preferably documentable ethical consent. In this research, all the teachers I interviewed participated voluntarily. I ensured that no influence or any kind of pressure was put on them when they were invited to participate in the research study, (Iowa State University, 2016; NESH, 2022) especially that a number of participants refused to participate when they learned about the topic even though they showed consent at the beginning, of them one refused for fear to be dismissed from employment because of the neutrality regulation at the UNRWA. I also ensured that the consents were informed and clear (NESH, 2022). The participants received an information letter in advance about the project to help them decide whether to participate as this letter explains what the study is about, what participation in the study involves, and other important information that participants need to know. I tried to make sure that the participants understand the purpose of the study, why it is important, and what they will contribute to the study field by the data they will provide.

Afterwards, I clarified to them that even after they give informed consents and until the study is submitted, they are free to withdraw and discontinue participation whenever they want without having to provide justifications or explanations (NESH, 2022). In the early stages of inviting some teachers, a number of teachers refused to participate. Although it was not easy for me to reach out to these teachers, it was important to respect their desire of not wanting to participate as participation should be voluntarily. Likewise, after some teachers accepted to participate, and after ensuring that they understand what they are agreeing upon, they withdrew in the day of the interview for personal reasons, among which were fear of the regulations and some because their life partner refused to be interviewed by a male teacher. Even though their withdrawal caused me some concerns as I had a limited time, I understood their wish of discontinuing as I did not want any further conversation with them to form any kind of pressure on their decision of participation. Also, I did not forget to thank them for their initial willingness to participate.

Considering maintaining confidentiality and respecting the being of the participants, I tried to be clear to them in all the actions I am conducting as it is essential that participants have confidence

in me as a researcher and to gain their trust in the research study (NESH, 2022). Having the intention to record the interviews to acquire accurate data (Swain & King, 2022), I informed the participants beforehand and confirmed their acceptance at the time we started the interview. They were also informed that their personal information will be anonymized which means that I will place their original names, which I did not ask about but were able to recognise through our communication via social media, for example, by “participant” and numbers, i.e., pseudonymous (Gatta et al., 2019; NESH, 2022). All the data will be stored in line with the advice of NSD, and no personal or sensitive data will be revealed at any time. Assuring the participants that I will deal with the information privately and will only use the information they provided during interviews for research purposes help strengthen their confidence in the study.

## **5.7 Positionality**

### *Insider role position*

Being part of the people that are involved in the research study, it is fundamental to understand my role and positionality in the research. As I am both a Palestinian from Gaza, and a teacher like my participants, I am considered as an insider in this research. According to Dwyer and Buckle (2009), this can be both challenging and advantageous. As an advantage, the inside role position helped me collect accurate, in-depth data. It made the participants completely accept me as a researcher and trust me and my study without having to make a lot of effort, even though I have been asked multiple times even during the interview whether their personal information will be anonymised. It helped the participants feel more approximate to me as a researcher; therefore, they were, to a big extent, comfortable in sharing answers, and they openly discussed the interview questions. The insider role position also allowed me to understand my participants’ views and answers deeper as I understand the circumstances revolving around in the teachers’ community and in the Gaza Strip (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

On the other hand, the insider role could be challenging for the researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Having a thorough knowledge of the teachers’ community in Gaza made me expect what they were going to say during interviews. This could cause failure in putting a fine line between what I expect them to say and what they actually said. To overcome being affected by my own views and beliefs, I took notes in the interviews alongside the audio recording.

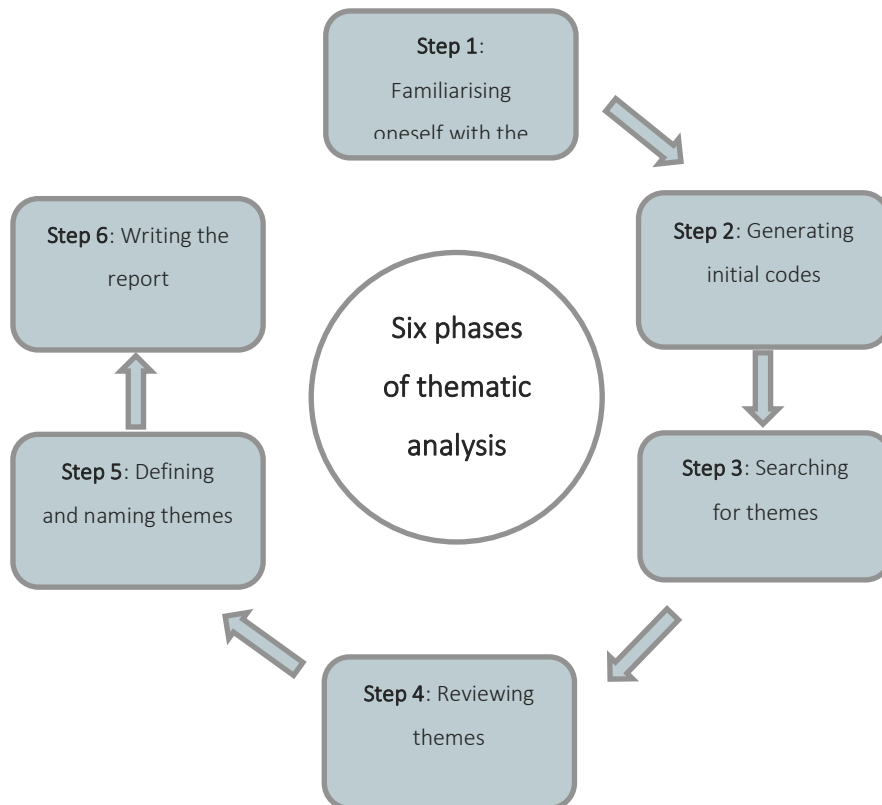
## **5.8 Data analysis**

I have chosen thematic analysis as a method for my data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method used to identify, analyse and report the patterns or themes that exist

within data. This method is not limited to organising and describing the data set in detail, but exceeds it to include interpreting different aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). My choice to employ thematic analysis rises from the distinctive feature it possesses that it works both to “reflect reality, and to unpick or unravel the surface of ‘reality’” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). My choice is also driven by the research questions I have to explore the perspectives of elementary stage teachers on the role of the curriculum in a) promoting Palestinian national identity, and b) providing an education for liberation. Thematic analysis is typically used in qualitative research for the purpose of understanding the meanings entailed in a text. Therefore, through the use of thematic analysis, I attempted to connect the tentative themes I had before starting the data collection from participants with the themes that emerged throughout my reading of the data I collected from my informants.

I coded the data in the form of themes as I analysed the data I collected from the semi-structured interviews. Only one of the interviews was conducted in English and one other informant spoke English at some points and Arabic at others. nine of the eleven interviews I had were conducted exclusively in Arabic as six of the teachers do not speak English and three are able to speak English, but chose to have the interviews in their first language so as to be able to express themselves the way they feel more comfortable. This added extra work in the analysis process as it added translation of the Arabic text into English.

In the process of data analysis, I followed the method of thematic content analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). As displayed in figure 5, this method encompasses the analysis of the data systematically through six phases of analysis as follows: 1) familiarising myself with my data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and, 6) producing the report, or writing up. The use of these phases outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006) provided me with a structured mechanism to analyse the text I collected in light of the theoretical framework I had selected forth.



*Figure 5 Braun & Clarke's phases of thematic analysis*

In the first phase, I familiarised myself with the data I collected from my informant. Braun and Clarke (2006) assimilated this phase to immersion, which they illustrated: “Immersion usually involves ‘repeated reading’ of the data, and reading the data in an *active way* – searching for meanings, patterns and so on” (p. 87, emphasis in original). I read through the data in an interactive way aiming at searching for meanings and picking up patterns to help me reflect on the data in light of the theory applied. I implemented the familiarisation phase through three steps. In the first step, I gathered all the notes I had jotted down while conducting the interviews and read through them. This step reminded me of the important notes I wanted to focus on in the analysis chapter. The second step involved listening through the recorded audio and transcribe the content. By the time I was listening and transcribing the content, the ideas (codes) the informants discussed during the interview were getting clearer to me as I highlighted some of the key aspects brought up which are connected to the research questions. In the third step, I translated the key elements and quotes I intended to use in my analysis of the data. Some researchers regard the process of transcription and translation as an exceptional way to familiarise the researcher with the data and a crucial phase of data analysis in qualitative research, even though the process is practically challenging and time consuming (Bird, 2005; Riessman, 1993). This process was not an exception in my journey; it took a lot of time and

effort. While translating the content of the interviews, being an insider to the community of the participants myself as a Palestinian from Gaza and as a teacher, I tried to transmit the participants' views without any distortion or alteration by using my sociocultural knowledge of both the language and the society of the research. This effort I exerted in transcribing and translating the interviews helped me identify the key concepts necessary for the analysis of data.

After familiarising myself with the data, I proceeded to the second phase of generating initial codes. This phase is mainly concerned with extracting codes through organising the data into meaningful groups – codes (Tuckett, 2005). The coding is either performed through a software program or manually. I performed the coding manually, wherein I identified the codes and paired them with the corresponding data extracts that demonstrate them. This was done in accordance with the suggestion of Braun and Clarke (2006) of highlighting the data extracts and writing notes to indicate potential patterns.

Having the initial codes extracted from the interviews, I proceeded to the third phase of searching for themes. This phase is connected and dependant on the previous phase of coding. Searching for themes “begins when all data have been initially coded and collated, and you have a long list of the different codes that you have identified across the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). It takes place when the analyst reflects on how different codes can be liked together to form a broader theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I paired the codes that have common conceptual links together and formed initial overarching themes.

In the fourth phase, I reviewed the themes I developed in the third phase. Bearing in mind the research questions, I followed the two levels suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) in reviewing and refining my themes. I refined my themes by reading the collated extracts for the themes to check whether they form a coherent pattern. After that, I checked the relevance of the data extracts to the applied themes. For those extracts that do not fit in, I listed them under more relevant themes, whereas those which do not fit in the already developed themes which answer the research questions were eliminated. I finalised listing the corresponding codes with each theme. By the end of this phase, I had three interconnected themes related to the promotion of national identity and the provision of education for liberation in the elementary school curriculum.

In the fifth phase, definition and further refinement are applied to the themes. The analyst of the data would be “identifying the ‘essence’ of what each theme is about (as well as the themes overall), and determining what aspect of the data each theme captures” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). I applied this by returning to the collated data extracts of each theme so as to organise them to ensure cohesion and consistency in the analysed text. I paraphrased the data extracts, further clarified the areas of interest about them, and backed them with a rationale for each of the extracts. I conducted

a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the generated themes and further organised the analysis by supplementing relevant subthemes to provide a structure and demonstrate the meanings within the data (further presented at length in chapter 6).

## 6 Data Findings and Analysis

Promoting the national identity manifested itself as one of the main concerns states governments have not only to preserve their group identity, but also to promote it and be able to cope with the changing world. Nation-states utilise education to consolidate a collective national narrative through making and enforcing their curriculum within their borders. The curriculum represents the basis on which future citizens share relatively common culture, values, history and traditions they develop at school. The care the process of creating and designing a curriculum receives varies from a state to another depending on the state's objectives, history, and vision for the future. Fully sovereign states, for instance, provide exceptional care for the sort of values and traditions they aim at transmitting from a generation to another, whereas less sovereign states pay less attention to the curriculum their citizens receive or are conditioned to lay some concessions so as to receive some sort of benefit. Therefore, curriculums often receive criticism as state officials use their power to prioritise aspects on the expense of others.

Given that the main objective of this paper is to check the role of the Palestinian curriculum in the elementary stage in promoting national identity and providing education for liberation from teachers' perspectives, this chapter attempts to answer the following main two research questions:

1. What the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum in providing an instrument for liberation?
2. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum in shaping Palestinian national identity?

The theoretical framework, Freire's critical theory of education, is the guiding star of this study. Therefore, the findings and data analysis displayed in this chapter are inspired and led by teachers' perspectives as well as Freire's critical theory of education. The two research questions are closely interconnected and answering one overlaps with and helps answering the other. As a consequence, both research questions are tackled simultaneously in the data analysis, where all three themes attempt to answer both research questions.

### 6.1 Ambivalence between content and common spirit

#### 6.1.1.1 Vagueness

“As long as their ambiguity persists, the oppressed are reluctant to resist, and totally lack confidence in themselves. They have a diffuse, magical belief in the invulnerability and power of the oppressor” (Freire, 2000, p. 64). Freire (2000) distinguishes between the reactionary education and revolutionary education in terms of their treatment to the past, the present and the future. The



traditional reactionary education, the distinctive features of which are indoctrination, memorisation and repetition, treats the present as permanent and the future as predetermined. As it emphasises permanence, it is characterised with immobility and knowledge is prepared in portions for the teacher to fill them into the empty receptacles (the students). On the other hand, the problem-posing education does not accept a predetermined future; rather, it is a revolutionary education that positions itself in the dynamic present and move forward towards the future with a prophetic and hopeful eye. In order to be an education that liberates, the learners in the problem-posing education look at the past to understand what and who they are so as to be able to build the future more wisely. Whereas learners of a reactionary education are objects that receive, memorise and repeat knowledge, learners of a liberating education are Subjects who reflect, interact and contribute to creating knowledge and transforming their realities (Freire, 2000).

One of the points raised about the role of the curriculum in promoting the Palestinian national identity is the confusion in the content of the curriculum about what Palestine is. One of the participants illustrated that there is a confusion about which Palestine the curriculum presents: is it the Historic Palestine before the Israeli occupation? or, is it what is left of Palestinian territories after the continuous colonial settlements? The participant continued:

There is nothing in the curriculum of the occupied cities that suggests that we have the right to return to them. These cities are limited to religious landmarks that exist in these cities, but there is nothing in the curriculum that suggests that they are Palestinian cities and that we were expelled from them and that we have the right to return to them. (Participant 5)

The interviewed teachers proposed criteria in order for an education to be promoting of the Palestinian national identity. Of the criteria they proposed, education has to present a) clear, and, b) consistent knowledge about what is Palestine and how the Palestinian state looks at the occupation state of Israel. The interviewed sample of all the subjects stated that they do not recognise Israel as a state. Participant 7, the social studies teacher, thought that even though not sufficient in promoting national identity, the social studies curriculum does provide clear statements that Palestine is presented in the book as the Historic Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital. All teachers of other subjects complained about the lack of clarity about the borders of Palestine and under what category Israel should be put. Whereas participant 1 was reluctant about whether the curriculum teaches about the Israeli occupation saying, “the grades I taught from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade to be honest, I don’t remember that we have tackled that,” the same participant provided a firm conclusion, “I think, me not remembering tells a lot that it is not even an important part.” A teacher of mathematics explained that the curriculum reinforces identity through Math questions about some Palestinian cities, but at the

same time clarified that there is no mention of any occupied city. The teacher suggested that the curriculum is restricted and monitored from outside parties.

What makes the curriculum even vaguer is the tight regulations UNRWA imposes on its staff to be completely neutral (further discussed in the following theme 5.2). The teacher of social studies illustrated that there is a clear ambivalence between what is there in the curriculum taught in this subject and the regulations that prevent teachers to use terms like “occupation” or “settlement” for instance. The participant said:

I know a teacher who published information about the proportions of Israeli settlement in the West Bank through his account on social media, so the teacher was suspended from work pending interrogation, and another teacher who was interrogated with and the supervisor of the specialization because of preparing an enriching material on the same topic that was originally in the textbook. (Participant 7)

This vagueness generated by the duality between the regulation that govern the UNRWA staff and the content of the social studies curriculum leads the teachers to censor their teaching in order to avoid losing their jobs. Although teachers argue that rarely does one find in the curriculum what promotes national values, “we take personal initiatives to enrich the students in these values” (Participant 5). Participant 2 adds, “had it not been for the teacher’s intervention, it [the curriculum] does not support the Palestinian [national] identity.” However, the personal initiatives teachers take while considering to keep their source of income mostly fall short of instilling national values due to the over-crowdedness of the curriculum and the limiting regulations. In the best cases as explained by Participant 4: “I try to take detours to convey some information to the students in order to strike a balance between preserving our livelihood and preserving what remains of our identity.” The best case explained by Participant 4, i.e., taking detours and explaining information that would contribute to the development of the Palestinian national identity in vague and inconsistent ways, unsurprisingly, only contribute in accumulating more distraction of young students who need to have national and geographical values inculcated in them in clear, consistent and motivating ways, rather than more distraction and disorientation.

These regulations are not the same for the teachers of the governmental schools in the Gaza Strip, especially that the governmental schools in the Gaza Strip are administrated by Hamas which opposes the policies of the Ramallah-centred Palestinian Authority. However, the curriculum is the same and the requirement to finish all the curriculum is also the same. Hence, vagueness in what the Palestinian homeland means is a given in the content of the Palestinian curriculum regardless of the efforts the teachers exert to bridge this gap in the elementary school curriculum. Furthermore, avoiding to educate about the Israeli occupation in the taught curriculum adds insult to injury for

being the root cause of the oppressive situation of Palestinians. This conclusion can be connected to Freire's description of the reality of the oppressed: "As long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically "accept" their exploitation" (Freire, 2000, p. 64). (Discussed further in "promoting ignorance").

In addition to having to present clear and consistent knowledge about Palestine and its relation to the occupation state of Israel, a libertarian and national identity-promoting curriculum requires, according to Freire (2000), to educate about the past, look critically at the present and strive to collaboratively shape the future of the nation rather than wait for others (the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian case) to predetermine the future for them.

Reflecting on the role of education in shaping the future of Palestine, Participant 4 and 1 agreed that education is the most effective means for the development of nations and the most important tool for social change. However, they expressed that the curriculum that we have today is incapable of providing a vision for shaping the future of Palestine. Freire (2000) emphasised that oppression is functionally domesticating. He developed a manual to turn upon oppression, achieve liberation and as a consequence be able to control one-self's future: "To no longer be prey to its [oppression] force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 2000, p. 51). Corresponding with Freire's manual, a teacher explained the way to achieve liberation through education as follows:

The starting point for liberation is an idea. Then it's followed by the knowledge. When you have the idea, you need the knowledge to support your idea and understand it more. After the knowledge you need the tools and I think tools could be part of the knowledge. The tools to act upon the knowledge that you have. As we're discussing liberation here, I think tools here sometimes *we have the tools inside of us but we are not aware of them* [emphasis added] or there are not developed in a way for us to use them so it's not always outside tools, but sometimes we need the outside tools. What makes us not developed enough brings us back to the idea of framing. When you frame someone, you develop some parts of them that you want to develop to serve their purpose. We're blinded most of the times. (Participant 1)

The teacher demonstrates a clear awareness about the role education needs to play and what the curriculum should aim at achieving. This answer also indicates that the teacher is able to notice that there is an urgent feeling inside of students that a change in their reality is a necessity to take place. However, this feeling is not developed, through education, to transform into the tools necessary to change the reality of oppression and shape the future, "which is not something given to be received by people, but is rather something to be created by them" (Freire, 2000, p. 39). This participant, not unlike other participants, asserts that this curriculum is blinding Palestinian students from their

national identity and from seeking to reflect and act upon their oppressive situation, especially as occupied and besieged citizens. The participant further posits that the Palestinian curriculum in its current form frames Palestinian students to serve the purpose of the oppressor, i.e., the occupation. “The oppressed, as objects, as “things,” have no purposes except those their oppressors prescribe for them” (Freire, 2000, p. 60). To conclude by connecting two forms of education Freire (2000) distinguished between, namely the problem-posing education and the reactionary education, participant teachers demonstrated in their answers that the Palestinian curriculum taught in the elementary schools is far from posing the problems, reflecting on them and proposing mechanisms to overcome them. As a consequence, the curriculum is described as being reactionary through the lenses of the interviewed teachers.

### 6.1.2 Diminishing history

Freire (2000) presents that the work he proposes in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is for radicals justifying that the radical is committed to human liberation in that the radical aims at knowing reality better for the purpose of transforming it. This individual has the willingness to explore the world, to listen and to enter into dialogue with others, bearing in mind that this radical does not own people or history and is not “the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side” (p. 39). Freire here asserts that while the radical is committed to liberation, this individual takes from learning about his or her reality a tool to move prophetically forward towards the future so as to transform it. However, this brings back looking at the past as a means to learn and understand “more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future” (Freire, 2000, p. 84). This implies that understanding the past is a precondition for liberation as well as building a better future.

To check the role of the curriculum in educating students in the elementary stage about their history with oppression and occupation, I asked the interviewed teachers about the significance of educating students about the history of Palestine and the role the curriculum plays in encouraging students to research about the Palestinian history. Two concepts were elicited from teachers’ answers: limitation of connection to historical Palestine and constant elimination of Palestinian content. Both concepts contribute to the obliteration of the Palestinian national identity and of the Palestinian emancipatory aspirations.

Discussing the role of the curriculum in educating about the history of Palestine, teachers emphasised a severe deficiency in addressing the occupation. Participant 8 expressed resentment against the curriculum for the scarcity of topics discussing the Palestinian history with occupation. The teacher said:

The curriculum may be exposed in passing to a topic about the occupation, but in my opinion, a curriculum that includes 10 units, it is not treated as should. Having an occupation that causes a big problem for every Palestinian, I would expect at least half the 10 units to treat this problem. This happens to everyone. Say, for example, I have a problem. You will find me talking about it to everyone about this problem. It does not make sense that while I have a problem myself, I would be discussing the problems of my neighbours. (Participant 8)

The idea the teacher highlighted corresponds with the nature of human beings. Freire (2000) provides two conditions for the oppressed in order to be able to wage a struggle or a revolution so as to gain liberation. First, they must perceive the reality of oppression. While learning about this reality, they need to have a belief that this oppressive reality can be transformed. One of the teachers mentioned that there are rhythmic songs in every unit of the taught curriculum, none of which comes from the Palestinian folklore even though the Palestinian folklore is rich of songs and tales that would enhance the students' connection to his or her history, culture and national identity. Another teacher clarified that there is not a single objective that supports the libertarian issue, not even in the national education teacher's guide. Second, this perception of the oppression and motivation to transform it need to lead to liberating actions. While the interviewed sample affirmed their beliefs that Palestinians are oppressed, they criticised the curriculum's sterility in providing a source to help students perceive their oppressive reality to provide them with the basis to emerge from this oppressive reality and turn upon it. In other words, the occupation is clearly a major impediment to liberation. As a consequence, the curriculum of the oppressed Palestinians is expected, in accordance with Freire's (2000) conditions for liberation, to dedicate sufficient content that helps learners perceive their oppressive reality, reflect on it, discuss it, and triggers them to search for solutions to wage a struggle against it. On the contrary, participant 4 reflects, "there is nothing [in the curriculum] that reflects about the challenges of establishing a Palestinian state. Thus, it does not reflect the Palestinian spirit, and the evidence is the objection of many to the curriculum." This demonstrates the negative way Palestine is presented in relation to the occupation.

Furthermore, the interviewed sample referred to the issue of the elimination of content that contributes to raising the students' perception of their Palestinian nationalism, their lived oppressive situation and the history of Palestine in relation to occupation. The interviewed teacher of social studies disapproved reducing social studies subject from containing four books (geography, history, civic education and national education) into one book. Participant 7 stated, "it [the content that promotes the Palestinian national identity] used to be clearer than it is today. With every new edition we receive every year a sentence or a paragraph about Palestine is omitted." The teacher gave an example about the omission of a paragraph about "the revolution of Izz ad-Din al-Qassam" which

used to be in a previous edition. Participant 8 said that the heritage found in the old curriculum was more than the new one. Not only that, but also what triggers students to search is omitted. Participant 8 clarified that the old curriculum used to trigger students to search. However, the curriculum today “does not at all encourage the search for the history or identity of Palestine. When I was a student, I used to go and search and learn more about some topics” (Participant 8). The teacher said that these points were raised and discussed with supervisors and their answer was that the occupation is responsible for this deletion. This correlates with Freire’s (2000) criticism to oppressive education, whereby manipulation, depositing and prescription are among the main components. Freire affirms that these are components of the praxis of domination, where the dominator denies to the people their right to think their own thoughts and say their own words. Participant 7 concluded regretfully, “if the policy remains as it is, I expect even the borders of Palestine in the curriculum will not remain as they are in the coming years, and they will be erased and transformed into peaceful coexistence.”

### 6.1.3 Passive follower, not active leader

In his critical theory of education, Freire (2000) clarified what he named the “banking” concept of education where education becomes an act of depositing. The teacher in this traditional type of education treats the minds of learners as depositories, where he deposits knowledge in the empty containers. In this traditional education, the learning process lacks communication between the teacher and the students. “Instead of communication, the teacher issues communiqué and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat” (Freire, 2000, p. 72).

Of the answers I received for the question “what is the collective memory the curriculum activates?”, there was an emphasis on “anger, helplessness and despair.” One of the teachers answered the following on the question:

That’s what I always hear my students say. They usually curse the curriculum books. They always complain about how much information they have in these books and how it doesn’t make sense to them. When I started teaching children of higher grades like ninth grade, they were aware of it. They notice that. They would say “why would we learn this?” They are not gonna use some information. For example, they [the curriculum] would teach some complicated rules they [students] will never use them. And they would start wondering why? So, anger is what they will remember from the education they receive. And I think this is the thing they are not aware of because I can see it now growing among parents; their anger about the curriculum. I think it is helplessness and despair that they will remember. When you have smart students who would start having kind of depression symptoms because of how

complicated everything is how much they need to memorise in order for them to get 'A's.  
(Participant 1)

From this answer, we can read that there is a common dissatisfaction among the students not only with the curriculum being overly crowded, but also with the content being disconnected with their lived realities and not addressing their interests. We can also infer from the teacher's answer that teachers, students and parents are aware of this problem. The qualities of this sort of education characterise the oppressive, traditional education which treats people [learners as merely guided objects] by adapting them to the objectives of the manipulator. This process is used as a means of "massification" which means in Brazilian political terminology "reducing the people to a manageable, unthinking agglomeration" (Freire, 2000, p. 148). The difference here is that not only students are the only objects which receive the action; the teachers are also guided through regulations to follow and finish all the curriculum regardless of what they think about what is important and what is not important, especially that the teachers do not participate in setting the questions of the final exams. If we connect this reading with Freire's critical theory of education, we find that truly libertarian education is problem-posing education, which bases itself on creativity. In the problem posing education, students are stimulated to reflect and take action upon their reality. This suggests that they are authentic beings as much as they take part in inquiry and creative transformation (Freire, 2000). However, the education that the teacher describes is the one that makes students objects that receive what the oppressor produces, unaware of their reality until they reach the point when they blindly follow the consciousness of the oppressor which Freire (2000) clarifies that it "tends to transform everything surrounding it into an object of its domination" (p. 58).

This participant thinks that anger is among what they will remember in the future from the education they receive from this curriculum. This participant also thinks that they are unaware of this anger at this stage, but indicates that the older students become aware and express their anger and frustration for the education that is detached from their reality. The anger, helplessness and despair generated in the minds of students stem from their passive role in the learning they receive. Their role is limited to rote learning where students memorise the *deposited* knowledge and repeat them when required. This passive role students have in the learning process is faced with struggle from the teachers to involve the students in dialogues and reflection, but as expressed by one of the teachers, "we have a curriculum that we are required to comply with. There are rarely any interactive lessons, perhaps one lesson during the semester" (Participant 3). This burdens the teachers with the responsibility to do their job within the constraints the curriculum poses by attempting to engage students and give them an active role to reflect on their learning. However, the limited time they have in their teaching plan, large content of the curriculum, and density of the classes with an average of

40+ students lead to more docility to the circumstances and more education that domesticates the learner rather than liberating them.

The curriculum is unable to provide any technical knowledge to the students. The teacher explains theoretically for the lack of time and possibilities. There is a very clear deficiency in the students' ability to express themselves. Communication skills are weak and fragile, and lessons do not develop them. Also, the students are not able to express their opinion, because there is no opportunity for them to speak in the class. All indoctrination. (Participant 4)

Treating the learners as empty vessels to be filled clearly results into the students' lacking of expression and composition skills. It creates a passive recipient rather than what a truly committed to the cause of liberation needs, i.e., reflection, active participation and influential leadership. Participant 6 concluded that, "the curriculum does not lay the basis to shape leaders, but rather establishes a person without a personality. A person who runs after obtaining grades." The content of the Palestinian curriculum, which represents the Palestinian Authority regardless to the pressure imposed on it, is the dialogue between the elite (authors) and the masses (students, and teachers). This resonates with the reflection Freire (2000) posits on the education that liberates and that which oppresses, "any apparent dialogue or communication between the elites and the masses is really the depositing of "communiqués," whose contents are intended to exercise a domesticating influence" (p. 131). As a consequence, the Palestinian curriculum positions itself on the side of the education that shapes a passive follower rather than an active leader.

#### 6.1.4 Promoting ignorance

Contrary to an education that liberates that possesses the ideology of triggering learners to pursue knowledge through exploration and questioning, a characterising symptom of an education system that is oppressive is teaching material that makes learners feel disconnected from their own experiences (Freire, 2000). So as to sustain their dominance over the oppressed, the oppressor utilises the oppressive education that contributes to the prevalence of ignorance among the oppressed to deprive them of the right to their own purpose, i.e., liberation. The more submissively the oppressed adjust to the purpose of the oppressor, the more docile pawn of the elites he or she becomes and consequently, the more confined from waging a struggle to achieve liberation (Freire, 2000). While asking about the role the curriculum plays in promoting national identity, participant 9 revealed that beside being limited in teaching about the Palestinian identity, the curriculum that we have today has a main focus on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Commenting on this response, the curriculum can be foundational to establish a basis for literacy and numeracy while still using a content that promotes national identity to teach reading and writing for instance. However, provided



that the curriculum focuses on stuffing students with information incompatible to the lived reality, while providing ambiguous input about their national identity, history and heritage, it produces parochial students lacking confidence in themselves and their cause. Freire (2000) suggests, “[a]s long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically “accept” their exploitation” (p. 64). A continuation to Freire’s argument, the purposeless and reluctant to resist oppressed (the outcome of this taming education) will not have the tools necessary to think critically, to enter into dialogue and to transform his or her reality.

Participant 10 recalled an incident when a teacher compiled a self-learning material for students. One of the multiple choices for the questions was “Jerusalem,” UNRWA administration asked the teacher to eliminate this choice or replace it with another choice, justifying that this goes against the regulation of the institution. Participant 8 added that education in Palestine serves the purpose for which it was found, not the purpose Palestinians want. “I find that it [the curriculum] was found to promote ignorance, or to provide knowledge that another party wants for us, not that we want for ourselves” (Participant 8). This stresses Freire’s reflection on the importance of finding the oppressor out, through education and reflection, to be able to involve in the struggle for liberation.

To conclude, the education provided through the Palestinian curriculum in the elementary stage according to the interviewed sample does not per se constitute an element for liberation, nor does it contribute positively in instilling the Palestinian national identity in students. The analysis of the collected data from the interviewed sample demonstrates an ambivalence between the common spirit of the Palestinians to achieve liberation and the content the curriculum provides. This in a way hinders preserving the collective identity of Palestinians, blurs their vision and undermines their chances to win their struggle to put an end to the oppressive situation they have been suffering from.

## **6.2 Negative neutrality: key to preserving oppression**

### **6.2.1 Superficial over-crowdedness**

Freire (2000) describes how the banking concept of education serves the interests of oppression. “Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power” (p. 77). By keeping the oppressed overwhelmed with memorising and repeating what they were indoctrinated while lacking objectives, the circle of oppression keeps spinning none-stop. The interviewed sample criticised the Palestinian curriculum of the elementary stage for addressing the quantity while eschewing the quality of the learned material.

Participant 6 complained that the curriculum is too crowded and the time is very limited. The direct indication inferred from this over-crowdedness of the curriculum is the negative impact it causes to teachers as they feel stressed to cover the topics. Participant 8, for instance, expressed clear dissatisfaction with the textbooks being too compacted, “this negatively impacts the teacher’s ability to give.” The stress of the teachers necessarily reflects not only students’ negative attitudes towards school and towards learning, but also limits their *participation* in discussions and co-creating knowledge, a decisive element to achieving radicalism. It also leads to reliance on memorisation and rote learning, and thus, diminishing critical and creative thinking skills rather than activating them.

While overcrowded, teachers argued that the quality of content in the curriculum is poor. One of the teachers said, “while it is very condensed, it is honestly empty of value” (participant 8). Participant 5 states that even though the curriculum content is detached from the students’ realities, the teachers have the capability to connect it through extra-curricular activities and supplementary materials to make it more connected to students’ realities and connect it in a way to create meaning to the students. However, the timeframe does not allow for extra-curricular activities. Also, the regulations that compel teachers to maintain their neutrality impede this process and turns it into a gambling the teachers are not willing to risk playing it. Given that some topics are seen less important than others and that reasonably, exams dictate what happens inside the classrooms, the over-crowdedness of the curriculum presumably results into emphasising topics over others which might give more meaning to students, especially that the teachers do not participate in setting final exams. This also emphasises neutralising the invaluable role the teacher is able to play to overcome the shortcoming of the curriculum.

Teachers who have the capacity to make a significant change in the process find themselves overwhelmed in the oppressive role they are compelled to continue to play involuntarily. Corresponding with what Freire (2000) argues, they find themselves spinning in a vicious circle of oppression “living “submerged” in a world to which they can give no meaning, lacking a “tomorrow” and a “today” because they exist in an overwhelming present” (p. 98). Teachers certified that this curriculum even though large and condensed with topics, lacks the quality of consolidating students’ national identity and belonging. Participant 8 suggested the urgency to reduce the content of the curriculum so as for the teachers to enrich the topics presented from all aspects. This suggestion goes in harmony with Freire’s (2000) teachings. it can be interpreted from the teacher’s suggestion that minimising the quantity of the curriculum in addition to revising the quality and value it adds to students as well as the teachers enriches the students’ awareness of their national identity, reinforces reflection of their lived reality, enhancing their critical thinking skills. These are all preconditions to shaping a radical individual (a member of the community) who reflects, interacts and able to co-create

the change to realise liberation. Therefore, the over-crowdedness and superficiality of the curriculum in addition to the lack of connection the curriculum has to the lives and experiences of the students are significant impediments to radicalism, which is a key to achieving liberation.

### 6.2.2 Incompatibility with reality

In criticism to oppressive education, Freire (2000) describes its symptoms in the banking concept of education. He asserts that this type of education suffers from “narration sickness” (p. 71). While being narrated, the content, including the facets of reality and the values, becomes lifeless and petrified. In the banking concept, the narration of reality is presented as though it is static and stagnant (Freire, 2000).

In correspondence with the common features of the oppressive education Freire (2000) is in criticism of, the values displayed in the Palestinian curriculum, according to the perceptions of the interviewed teachers, indicate obsolescence and alienation from the lived reality. Participant 7 claimed that students have a sense of awareness of their national identity, but at the same time denied the curriculum’s contribution in creating this awareness. However, the teacher thinks that this awareness is still lacks refinement and consolidation. The teacher added, “it [the curriculum] is just a bunch of information presented in an abstract way that does not keep pace with reality” (Participant 7). The teacher claimed that what creates the sense of awareness of the children’s national values and instils national identity in them are the accelerated events and the community, whereas the role of the formal education through the curriculum of the elementary stage is missing. The analysis of the participant’s answer through Freire’s critical theory of education, it can be understood that it is neutral in the face of the reality the students face. The teacher uses the word “abstract” in clarifying the sort of information the curriculum provides. For example, participant 3 referred to a lesson titled “Freedom” saying, “rather than connecting it to the Palestinian situation as lacking to this freedom, it treats the value of freedom in an abstract way. The lesson is about a bird in a cage with no reference to our situation.” This abstraction embedded in the curriculum contributes to the total opposite of triggering reflection which leads to the perception of the individuals of the oppression revolving around their reality.

To further elaborate on the role of the curriculum in the educational process in providing a source for promoting the Palestinian national identity, the sample were asked about the modernity of the curriculum taught today. Participant 6 answered with an example question in the mathematics textbook:

The curriculum is obsolete. Even the pictures are old and do not keep pace with development. For instance, the question asks about the number of users of the internet in Palestine and the

number the question provides is very small, the users of the internet in any small neighbourhood in Palestine exceeds this number. (Participant 6)

The example the teacher provided presents a clear dissatisfaction among the interviewed sample about the curriculum for being detached from the experiences of the students. This causes demotivation of both the teachers and the students and consumes the class-time with questions and discussions about side issues, such as the pictures and the inauthentic numbers, rather than focusing the attention on main issues that help the students keep up with the world around him or her. This could relate to Freire's (2000) clarification of the banking concept of education where the topics are "completely alien to the existential experience of the students... [The contents] are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hallow, alienated, and alienating verbosity" (Freire, 2000, p. 71)

While the curriculum as well as the UNRWA regulations reinforce neutrality, the neutral education does not exist. Education is either used to function as a means to achieve liberation through genuine critical reflection on reality and playing a role in transforming it, or an instrument to institutionalise the young generations and bring them into conformity with the oppressive status quo. Therefore, neutrality and abstraction are not really standing on a fence. Neutrality in an oppressive situation is standing at the side of the oppressor. To elaborate, Freire (1985) states, "[w]ashing one's hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral" (p. 122). For its obsolescence and inability to connect the students with their lived reality that is characterised with oppression, it was suggested by the interviewed sample of teachers who have been teaching this curriculum for years that the curriculum of the elementary stage does not only require modification, but needs to be changed as a whole so as to be able to genuinely address the pressing issue of promoting the Palestinian national identity.

### 6.2.3 Western funds: false generosity

Freire (2000) clarifies that generosity does not always represent a goodwill. The oppressor, and sometimes through its allies, use charity to constrain the oppressed to serve the purpose of the oppressor through maintaining the status quo of oppression. Freire (2000) testifies that any form of generosity with the purpose to "soften" the power of the oppressor defending the weak oppressed, rather than seeking to eliminate the oppressive power, "almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity" (Freire, 2000, p. 44). In order to maintain their capacity to express their generosity, they need the oppression to keep going. In other words, as long as injustice, despair and poverty take place and perpetuate, they will still have the opportunity demonstrate their generosity. False

generosity is the other side of the coin of oppression because rather than assisting to erase the source of oppression, it feeds on continuing this oppression. Furthermore, false generosity compels the oppressed “to extend their trembling hands,” (Freire, 2000, p. 45) in fear and supplication. Meanwhile, true generosity aims at liberating these hands and transforming them into human hands that work and work to transform their realities.

The interviewed sample were asked about their perception of the role foreign funds for education and for programmes play in relation to the education for liberation. The answers were clear in favour of what corresponds with Freire’s (2000) definition of false generosity. “It is a conditioned fund that incorporates foreign agenda because the support does not target the system as a whole” (participant 4). Likewise, participant 8 stated, “I think what is provided for education is not actually provided for the sake of education, but rather to be said to have been provided. It does not reflect the students’ development.” Analysing the answers in light of Freire’s (2000) concept that distinguishes between false and true generosity, we find that targeting an aspect of a system that does not reflect the students’ development is a form of customising the system to serve the interests of the donor. In addition to that, the participant’s perception of the foreign funds to education in Palestine being offered to be said that it is offered is a typical embodiment of Freire’s (2000) description of false generosity. Participant 11 added, “in my point of view, the foreign fund is not for liberation. It is just to keep us living this way.” I believe that this answer is remarkably expressive. It demonstrates the shared purpose of both the oppressor and the donor to perpetuate the state of oppression: for the oppressors to maintain their grip of power and domination over the oppressed, and for the donors to maintain their opportunity to express their generosity. Furthermore, participant 7 is convinced that the purpose of the funding is to “cover the basic livelihood of the employees in order to silence them, not for the quality of education,” and concluded with a Palestinian common proverb, “Feed the mouth, the eye will be meek.”

To conclude, the Palestinian curriculum of the elementary stage is lacking the essence that contribute to making the curriculum and the education process a liberating one. Rather than being an instrument for liberation and for promoting the Palestinian national identity, the curriculum is neutralised, partly due to foreign funding, against the challenges that face the Palestinian liberation and state building. This recalls the famous Arabic proverb, “He whose food is not from his axe, his decision is not from his head,” which means that only when the resources are provided from by the individuals or groups who lead the revolution against oppression, will the policies and consequently the curriculum be decided to serve the purpose of the oppressed.

## 6.3 Hierarchical bureaucracy: “I’m just a commanded slave!”

### 6.3.1 The teacher: an enthusiastic cog in a rotten oppressive machine – power hierarchy

According to Freire (2000), the oppressed are treated as mere objects and have no purpose except for what their oppressors dictate. As education in Palestine is largely funded by foreign western funds, the condition of education according to the interviewed sample is not positive in supporting a libertarian education that is based on critical reflection of the reality through posing the problems of this reality and simultaneously triggers taking action upon this reality to transform it (Freire, 2000). There is a prevailing feeling among those working in the field of education or those who are familiar with the situation of education in Palestine that the education received at the elementary stage serves a foreign purpose by local helpless hands. The interviewed teachers showed awareness of the role education should play and what the curriculum needs to strive to accomplish. They recognise the strong desire for change among students as well as their desire to help them achieve this change, but feel that the current curriculum does not equip them with the necessary tools to bring about that change which enables them to shape their future with their own hands according to their own visions and purposes.

Whereas the problem-posing education, the education that liberates, is based on critical reflection of all the elements of the educational process, including students and teachers per se (Freire, 2000), the education in Palestine, according to the interviewed sample, is based on power hierarchy and is influenced by foreign policies. I asked the interviewed teachers, what the main principles the curriculum is built upon according to the product they have, i.e., the curriculum. The answers had a common ground that whoever prepared the curriculum does not have the freedom to produce a curriculum that expresses a true Palestinian national spirit. “Politics play a huge role in preparing our curriculum. In fact, I believe that whoever prepared the curriculum does not see our students and does not know our schools” (participant 8). Other participants were more critical of the designers of the curriculum by stating that who designed and authored the curriculum they teach are not Palestinians, which is true in the case of the English subject book where the author and designer are British.

Even away from the idea of liberation and freedom, if you have a look at the curriculum, you will find it so silly as if it is someone who has visited Palestine for a couple of days and was like, ok give me some important places in Palestine some important topics and some important food, and then was like, ok I’ll start a curriculum about you, and was like, ok this is your curriculum. It does not work this way. (Participant 1)

To analyse the responses of the interviewed teachers, it can be elicited that the change is not easy to be secured within a hierarchical structure that governs the education system in Palestine. The enthusiastic teacher believes that if not for him or her, education through the curriculum is detached from the Palestinian oppressive reality. At the same time, with all the efforts the teacher tries make up for the shortcomings of the curriculum in promoting the Palestinian national identity, his or her efforts are faced by the confining regulations. “The system is governed in a hierarchal bureaucracy. Everyone fears everyone, and whatever the foreigner<sup>9</sup> wants is enforced” (participant 4).

The oppressive situation referenced by the teachers’ contributions makes from the enthusiastic teacher a cog in a rotten oppressive machine. To apply this hierarchal system on Freire’s (2000) dialogical character of education as a practice of freedom, it can be found that it is difficult, if not almost impossible, for the local native Palestinian – be it a teacher, a student, or a parent – to have a dialogue, enter into discussion, or provide a suggestion that serves the purpose of the Palestinian native student with the foreign director of the organisation who does not speak their language, but still decides what he thinks is best for them. Even worse is when native local employees who perform less senior administrative tasks are programmed into conformity to the logic of the oppressive system. They internalise the role of the oppressor (Freire, 2000) and blindly perform, supervise and report about the imposed oppressive regulations, which serve neither their purpose, nor the purpose of the future generations of students. This is represented by the contribution of participant 6, “we have the problem of the commanded slave. What the principal says is effective. There is no personality for education. The principal says ‘I am the commanded slave’ when implementing any policy regardless of the interest of the students.” This goes in harmony with the simile participant 1 provided “the reality of our education is like a picture I saw in which a group of people, each standing under the boots of the other, each of them receiving orders and passing them on to those under his boots.” This gruesome portrayal of reality recalls one of the most famous quotations by George Orwell (1949), in which the grand inquisitor of the totalitarian regime in the novel says, “[i]f you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face—for ever” (p. 337)

Participant 2 asserted that neither the students nor the teacher chooses or has the capability to choose what to teach or learn. “This is the curriculum, this is the teacher, this is the student, and the lessons must be implemented as they are” (Participant 2). The hierarchical structure of the education system in Palestine, according to the interviewed teachers, undermines the role of education as an instrument for liberation. Instead, it censors critical reflection of reality and paralyses the

---

<sup>9</sup> Referring the director of UNRWA in the Gaza Strip who has across different tenures been a white western man.

emancipatory aspirations of Palestinians generation after generation. Furthermore, it promotes the indoctrination of young students and adjusting them to a reality which must remain untouched.

### 6.3.2 Authoritarian dialogue: “we communicate, but you must obey!”

According to Freire (2000) the process of persistently recreating the world by people can only exist with humility, not arrogance. If one of the (or both) parties who are working towards a shared purpose of learning and taking action lack humility, the dialogue is broken. The dialogue would be an impossible task if one of the parties projects ignorance onto the other, and consequently, feels offended by their contribution, considers recreating the world is not their task (rather, the task of the elites), or makes the other feel afraid of being displaced (Freire, 2000). The mere possibility of being displaced causes the other “torment and weakness... At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramus nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know” (Freire, 2000, p. 90).

In the classroom, the dialogue and interaction between the teacher and the student is characterised with limitation. The large quantity of topics in the curriculum, the over-crowdedness of students in the class, side by side with the limited timeframe planned for finishing the topics play a big role in limiting students’ interaction, which encompasses both critical reflection and active participation in dialogues with each other and with the teacher. “The students run and I run with them like a writing machine [due to the overcrowded curriculum]” (participant 6).

Outside of the class, the topic of education reform was highlighted by the interviewed sample in different ways. Some stressed the importance of immediate educational reform to make education in Palestine compatible with the accelerating events on the ground as a result of the occupation. Others asserted that the curriculum needs to be changed as a whole to represent a Palestinian collective spirit, rather than representing the vision and policies of the ruling authority. However, within the exclusivity policy in making decisions and the power hierarchy, it becomes an impossibility to achieve a radical change. Participant 11 thinks that there is no possibility for change, but there is a possibility to speak with a supervisor. “However, some supervisors have a self-sufficiency with their opinion (I am always right). At a time, they would say, do this, and after a year or two, don’t. This creates conflict among teachers at times” (participant 11). This makes from the teachers impotent in their attempts to have a dialogue and makes the process of dialogue unequal and thus futile. Furthermore, Freire (2000) asserts that both parties who enter dialogue need to possess the prerequisite of humility, that they both are “attempting, together, to learn more than they now know” (p. 90). However, when one of the parties who enters the dialogue is preoccupied with the premise that he is the owner of knowledge and his guardian, the outcome of the dialogue is inevitable before



the authoritarian dialogue even starts. In this case, the dominant markets himself or herself as a democratic person who is willing to communicate, but at the end the other interlocuter must obey.

## 7 Conclusion

This study aimed at exploring the role of the Palestinian curriculum in providing an instrument for liberation and in promoting the elementary school children's awareness of their national identity. The collected data are the views of teachers in the Gaza Strip through online semi-structured interviews, which formed basis for the research study and for the analysis. I have conducted a content thematic analysis of the collected data from teachers. Three themes have been generated from the interviews content related to the teachers' perspectives on the curriculum in relation to liberation and promoting the Palestinian national identity – (1) ambivalence between content and common spirit, (2) negative neutrality: key to preserving oppression, and (3) hierarchical bureaucracy: "I'm just a commanded slave!" These themes and their subthemes were presented and analysed in chapter 6 in light of Freire's critical theory of education.

In the words of Freire (2000), a dedicated person to human liberation from oppression does not get cornered in a limited mindset where his or her perception of reality gets also confined. Conversely, the more radical an individual is, the more he or she immerses themselves in reality, gaining better knowledge of it, he or she has the capability to transform it more effectively. "This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them" (Freire, 2000, p. 39). In Freire's (2000) critical theory of education, Freire aims at shaping a radical individual who is aware of his or her reality, who is not afraid to confront and enter into dialogue and indeed, who is capable of transforming this reality and shaping his or her future. The curriculum, a decisive element of the quality of the educational process, is thus influential to be highlighted in this study. In connection to this, I have attempted to explore the role of the curriculum of the elementary stage in Palestine through the perspectives of teachers from the Gaza Strip in providing an element for liberation and in promoting the Palestinian national identity.

People's perceptions of matters are variable, and so is their perception of national identity. My study focused on bringing about the teachers' perspectives on the promotion of national identity through the elementary stage curriculum without entering into what they perceive of the Palestinian national identity and what demarcates it. Likewise, I attempted to survey the teachers' perspectives on the elementary stage curriculum in providing an instrument for liberation without having to set borders for the meaning of the term. In addition to that, it is important to clarify that this study is not an investigation of the teachers' perspectives on the teaching and learning that actually happen inside the classroom; rather, it is a survey of the teachers' perspectives on the role the curriculum plays in enhancing and facilitating the educational process that helps achieving liberation and national identity promotion.

The thematic content analysis of the collected data was guided and aimed at answering the two research questions in light of Freire's critical theory of education:

1. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum as an instrument for liberation?
2. What is the perception of Palestinian teachers on the role of the Palestinian curriculum in shaping Palestinian national identity?

Each of the three generated themes provided an answer to both research questions. Through the analysis of the interviews, it was found that the perspectives of the interviewed sample are proximate in their dissatisfaction with the role the curriculum plays in shaping the Palestinian national identity as well as in providing an education as an instrument for liberation. Whereas there is proximity in the teachers' perspectives, their views are not identical. Therefore, the generated themes aimed at laying a common ground for the analysis of the data and for the presentation of the findings.

In the first theme, it was found, according to the interviewed sample, that the curriculum of the elementary stage presents information about Palestine that does not represent the common spirit of Palestinians; rather, a representation of the ruling authority that lacks credibility among Palestinians, especially that the president of the PA has been in power without election since 2005. The sort of knowledge that would educate students about their national identity is characterised with ambiguity and inconsistency. There was also a reference by the interviewed sample to the elimination of the content that would instil the Palestinian values in the students year after year with each new edition of the curriculum textbooks. This indicates the alteration of the perception of the oppressed of their reality, which results into the obliteration of national identity contrary to the Freirean theory of liberation. The curriculum was found to shape a passive, characterless and docile individual who seeks collecting marks by memorisation of content rather than critical reflection and creative thinking. The data collected from the interviews also shows a discrepancy between the desire of Palestinians for emancipation and the content of the curriculum. This ambivalence can impede the preservation of their collective identity, obscure their goals, and diminish their ability to overcome their oppressive circumstances.

In the second theme, it was found that the curriculum is overcrowded in quantity, yet poor in quality. The superficial over-crowdedness of the curriculum is reflected in the negative attitudes of students towards school and learning. Furthermore, it limits their ability to participate in discussion. As a consequence, the reliance on memorization and rote learning increases. Meanwhile, critical and creative thinking skills are necessarily diminished. In addition to being superficial, the analyses indicated that the content presented is incompatible with the realities and experiences of students. This abstraction of presenting concepts results into emptying words of their concreteness and

providing a hollow, alienated, and alienating education that neither serves the purpose of promoting national identity, nor the purpose of providing education that liberates. The analysis of the collected data concluded that the foreign funds of education, namely the western funds, are exploited by the donors to dictate their policies on the Palestinian education. This “false generosity” has been domesticating the Palestinian aspiration for liberation and has been adding nothing but more neutrality and docility to education in Palestine in the face of occupation.

The last theme discussed power hierarchy in relation to education in Palestine. The findings indicated that the hierarchical structure of the education system in Palestine hinders the potentiality of education to serve as a tool for liberation. On the contrary, it stifles the hopes for liberation of Palestinians across generations. The hierarchical structure of both the government and the UNRWA paralyzes the potentiality for change and development and makes the enthusiastic efforts the teacher exerts go unheeded. The teacher motivated by his or her consciousness and conscience in such a confining system is fighting alone like an enthusiastic cog in a rotten oppressive machine. The dialogue in education system in Palestine is found to be an authoritarian one, where a western white man who does not speak the language of the natives decides what he thinks is best for them. The dialogue in this system is an unlikely possibility, and when it takes place, the dominant party enters the dialogue preoccupied with the premise that he is the owner of knowledge and his guardian making the result of the dialogue inevitable. In this system, the dominant might communicate, but the *communicated to* must always obey. This sort of dialogue contributes to anything but more dominance, more docility and more stagnancy to reality of education.

To conclude, it was found that there is a severe deficiency in the Palestinian perspective not only in the content of the curriculum, but also in the policies around which education in Palestine is governed. There is also a lack of academic research about the education in Palestine from Palestinian practitioner perspectives. Therefore, I recommend that more studies be conducted about education, the curriculum and the policies governing the process of designing it in Palestine. Furthermore, I recommend that more studies be conducted on the role of social and religious community centres in promoting the Palestinian national identity and in providing an education for liberation.

## Bibliography

- Abu-Saad, I., & Champagne, D. (2006). Introduction: A Historical Context of Palestinian Arab Education. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 49(8), 1035–1051.
- Adwan, S., Bar-Tal, D., & Wexler, B. E. (2016). Portrayal of the Other in Palestinian and Israeli Schoolbooks: A Comparative Study. *Political Psychology*, 37(2), 201–217.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/44132870>
- Al Ramiah, A., Hewstone, M., & Schmid, K. (2011). Social identity and intergroup conflict. *Psychological Studies*, 56(1), 44–52.
- Alashqar, Y. (2020). From Covid-19 to the ‘deal of the century’ – Palestine and International Law. *Mondoweiss (News & opinion about Palestine, Israel and the United States)*.  
<https://mondoweiss.net/2020/04/from-covid-19-to-the-deal-of-the-century-palestine-is-undefeated/>
- Al-Haj, M. (1995). Education, empowerment and control: *The case of the Arabs in Israel*. Albany: State University of New York.
- Aljazeera. (2006). *Hamas wins huge majority*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2006/1/26/hamas-wins-huge-majority>
- Amnesty International. (2022). Israel’s Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity. *Amnesty International Publications*. London, England.
- Anderson, B. R. O. 1. (2006). *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Rev. ed. London; New York: Verso.
- Appiah, K. A., & Gates, H. L. (Eds.). (1995). *Identities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Asaad, D. (2000). Palestinian educational philosophy between past and present, *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 19, (5-6), 387-403.
- Ashmore, R. D., & Jussim, L. (1997). *Self and identity: Fundamental issues*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ashmore, R. D., Jussim, L., & Wilder, D. (Eds.). (2001). *Social identity, intergroup conflict, and conflict reduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Bachelet, M. (2022). United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Human Rights Council 49th Session. Geneva. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/03/occupied-palestinian-territory>
- Bajt, V. (2010). *Nationalism from Nation to Statehood: The Emergency of Slovenia*. Saarbrücken. (P. 141).

- Baltar, F. and Brunet, I. (2012), Social research 2.0: virtual snowball sampling method using Facebook, *Internet Research*, 22 (1), 57-74. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10662241211199960>
- Barakat, B. F. (2007). The struggle for Palestinian national education past and present. C. Brock and L. Z. Levers (Eds). *Aspects of Education in the Middle East and North Africa*. Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Barrett, M. (2000). *The development of national identity in childhood and adolescence*. Conference papers from the Department of Psychology.
- Bird, C. M. (2005). How I Stopped Dreading and Learned to Love Transcription. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 11(2), 226–248. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800404273413>
- Bowman. H. (1942). *Middle East Window*. London: Longmans Green.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Broco, F. S., & Trad, J. (2011). *Education in the Palestinian Territories*. Centro de Estudios de Oriente Medio de la Fundación Promoción Social de la Cultura. Retrieved from [https://cemofps.org/documents/download/education\\_in\\_the\\_palestinian\\_territories.pdf](https://cemofps.org/documents/download/education_in_the_palestinian_territories.pdf)
- Brown, N. J. (2003). Democracy, history and the contest over the Palestinian Curriculum. *Cairo Papers in Social Science* 25(4).
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods*: Oxford university press.
- Byung-Jin, L. (2003). Education and National Identity. *Policy Futures in Education*, 1(2), 332–341. <https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2003.1.2.9>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods*. In: Singapore: Sage publications, Inc.
- Croucher, S. L. (2018). *Globalization and belonging: The politics of identity in a changing world (Second edition.)*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Diaz, J. (2017). *The Importance of National Identity in Social Studies Classes in Puerto Rico: An Examination of Teacher and Student Perceptions of “Lo Nacional”*. Dissertations. 637. <https://irl.umsl.edu/dissertation/637>
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The Space between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8, 54-63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105>
- Fearon, J. D. (1999). *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)?* California: Stanford University.

- Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power, and liberation*. South Hadley, Mass: Bergin & Garvey.
- Freire, P. (1996). *Pedagogy of Autonomy: Necessary Knowledge for Educational Practice*. Sao Paulo: Paz e Terra.
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. 30th anniversary ed. New York, Continuum.
- Freire, P., & Shor, I. (1987). *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, Macmillan.
- Gadotti, M., & Milton J. (1994). *Reading Paulo Freire: His Life and Work*. State University of New York Press.
- Gatta, M., Tyner-Mullings, A., & Coughlan, R. (2019). *Ethnography Made Easy*.  
[https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=nc\\_oers#:~:text=At%20its%20most%20basic%20core,part%20of%20the%20human%20experience](https://academicworks.cuny.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1036&context=nc_oers#:~:text=At%20its%20most%20basic%20core,part%20of%20the%20human%20experience).
- Gleason, P. (1983). Identifying Identity: A Semantic History. *Journal of American History*, 6(9), 10-931.
- Hall, S. (1989). Ethnicity: Identity and Difference. *Radical America* 23, 9-20.
- Hamamra, B., Alawi, N., & Daragmeh, A.K. (2021). Covid-19 and the decolonisation of education in Palestinian universities. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53, 1477 - 1490.
- Hewitt, T. (2006). *Understanding and shaping curriculum: What we teach and why*. SAGE Publications, Inc., <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452204277>
- Hobsbawm, E. (1992). *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality (2nd ed., Canto)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CCOL0521439612
- Hussein, Y. (2005). The Stone and the Pen: Palestinian Education During the 1987 intifada. *The Radical Teacher*, 74, 17–22. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20710326>
- Iowa State University. (2016). *Recruitment of Research Participants*. Iowa State University Institutional Review Board.  
<https://www.compliance.iastate.edu/sites/default/files/imported/irb/guide/docs/Recruitment%20of%20Research%20Participants.pdf>
- Jouda, M. (2018). *Adaptation and Resilience Level of Wadi Gaza Neighborhoods Due to continuous seasonal Flooding*. Master thesis, The Islamic University of Gaza. <https://library.iugaza.edu.ps/thesis/124840.pdf>
- Judeh, T., Haddad, M., & Özerol, G. (2017). Assessment of water governance in the West Bank. Palestine. *International Journal of Global Environmental Issues*, 16(1–3), doi:10.1504/IJGENVI.2017.083426

- Khalidi, R. (1997). *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Mackenzie, W. J. M. (1978). *Political identity*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Ringwood, Vic: Penguin.
- Man Chong, K. (2012). *Perceptions and teachings of national identity and national education: case studies of Hong Kong's secondary school teachers*. PhD thesis, University of York.  
<http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/744312>
- Mar'i, S. (1978). *Arab education in israel*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.
- Nasr, N. (2022). The first Palestinian curriculum for general education. *Palestine-israel Journal*.  
<https://pij.org/articles/957/the-first-palestinian-curriculum-for-general-education>
- OCHA. (2013). *Analytical Update on the Access Restricted Areas in the Gaza Strip Monitoring of access to land in the 'buffer zone' following the 21 November 2012 agreement*.  
[http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/\\_assets/files/field\\_protection\\_clusters/Occupied\\_Palestinian/files/oPt\\_PC\\_Analytical\\_Update\\_Access\\_Land\\_in\\_ARA\\_05.2013\\_EN2013.pdf](http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/_assets/files/field_protection_clusters/Occupied_Palestinian/files/oPt_PC_Analytical_Update_Access_Land_in_ARA_05.2013_EN2013.pdf)
- OCHA. (2019). *Gaza Strip Access and Movement*. [https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/OCHAACCMOVMAP\\_220819.pdf](https://www.un.org/unispal/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/OCHAACCMOVMAP_220819.pdf)
- Orwell, G. (2021). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Penguin Classics.
- PCBS. (2022). *Population, Indicators*. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, State of Palestine.  
[https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang\\_\\_en/881/default.aspx#Population](https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/site/lang__en/881/default.aspx#Population)
- Priestley, M., & Philippou, S. (2019) Curriculum is - or should be - at the heart of educational practice. *Curriculum Journal*, 30 (1), 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2019.1598611>
- Qur'an* (Khalifa, R., Trans.). (1982). Islamic Productions.
- Ramahi, H. (2015). *Education in Palestine: current challenges and emancipatory alternatives*. Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung. <https://www.rosalux.ps/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/RLS-Study-29.11.15-final.pdf>
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Rigby, A. (1995). *Palestinian Education: The Future Challenge*. Jerusalem: Passia.
- Seton-Watson, H. (1977). *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism (1st ed.)*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429047671>
- Shor, I. (1993). Education is Politics: Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. In Peter McLaren & Peter Leonard (eds.), *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*. Routledge.
- Shvets, I. (2020). *Promoting National Identity through Education: "The Concept of the National-Patriotic Upbringing of Children and Youth" in Ukraine*. <https://academic->



journals.eu/pl/download?path=%2Fuploads%2FZm9sZGVycHVibWVkaWEyNA%3D%3D%2Fdocuments%2Fmonografia-td-uj-2-7.pdf

Stabback, P. (2016). *What makes a quality curriculum?* In-Progress Reflection No. 2 Paris: UNESCO.

Swain, J., & King, B. (2022). Using Informal Conversations in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 21. <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221085056>

Taylor, C. (1989). *The Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH). (2022). *Guidelines for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities*. (NESH).

Tuckett, A. G. (2005) Applying thematic analysis theory to practice: A researcher's experience, *Contemporary Nurse*, 19, 1-2, 75-87, [10.5172/conu.19.1-2.75](https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.19.1-2.75)

United Nations General Assembly. (1947). *Resolution 181 (II), A/RES/181 (II)*. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/038/88/PDF/NR003888.pdf?OpenElement>

United Nations General Assembly. (1948). Resolution 194 (III), Palestine – *Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator*, A/RES/194 (III).

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/IP%20ARES%20194.pdf>

United Nations Newsletter (2022). *The Palestinian President calls for full membership of the State of Palestine in the United Nations and an International Plan to end the Israeli Occupation* (Arabic). <https://news.un.org/ar/story/2022/09/1112341>

United Nations. (1948). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.

UNRWA. (2013). *UNRWA framework for the analysis and quality implementation of the curriculum*.

[https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa\\_curriculum\\_framework\\_2013.pdf](https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/unrwa_curriculum_framework_2013.pdf)

UNRWA. (2019). *Gaza emergency UNRWA*. <https://www.unrwa.org/gaza-emergency>

UNRWA. (2021). *Refugee camps in the Gaza Strip*. <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/gaza-strip>

Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York, NY. In: Guilford Publications, Inc.

- Yousuf, A. (1956). *The British educational policy in the Arab public schools of Palestine during the mandatory period*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington.
- Yuen, T. W. W., & Mok, F. K. T. (2014). Promoting National Identification through Civic Education: A Study of the Views of Civic Educators in Hong Kong. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 13(2), 82–92. <https://doi.org/10.2304/csee.2014.13.2.82>
- Zeidan, A. (2019). *Gaza Strip TERRITORY, MIDDLE EAST*.  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Gaza-Strip>

## List of figures

- Figure 1 Gaza Strip as Part of the Historical Palestine
- Figure 2 The Gaza Strip Borders.
- Figure 3 Map of the Eight Refugee Camps in the Gaza Strip.
- Figure 4 Questions to be answered in the chapter
- Figure 5 Braun and Clarke’s phases of thematic analysis

## List of tables

- Table 1 Revised study plan – Ministry of Education & Higher Education, General Directorate of Planning & Development

# Annexes

## Information letter

To teacher of ..... subject

### Information about participation in the research project

#### *Palestinian Elementary School Curriculum as an Instrument for Liberation and Consolidation of National Identity: A Critical Freirean Study Based on Teachers' Perspectives in the Gaza Strip*

My name is Adham Ashqar. I am a Master's student at University of South-Eastern Norway [USN]/Department of Culture, Religion and Social Studies at a Master's program called Human Rights and Multiculturalism. I am a teacher of English and have been working in Schools in Gaza for nearly 6 years. My main interest in this project is the children's right to receiving relevant and sufficient education that promotes their awareness of their national identity and receiving education for liberation.

“It was found in a number of studies that the importance of national identity for children increases significantly between the age of 5 and 11 years. Likewise, the children's acquisition of national geographical knowledge positively correlates with their sense of national identity.”

My Master's project explores the perspectives of the elementary school teachers in Palestine, with Gaza as a case study, on the construction of the Palestinian national identity and the liberation in the curriculum of the elementary school, and I would like to invite you to participate in creating this project together with me. In this letter I will give you information about the purpose of the project and what the participation will involve.

### **Purpose of the research project**

The principal objective of this paper is to generate knowledge about the efficiency of the Palestinian curriculum in promoting the elementary school children's awareness of their national identity and in providing them with education for liberation. This project takes from teachers' views in the Gaza Strip a main source of input to generate this knowledge. The collected data will be the basis for the written article and for the drawn conclusions.

The research project will create knowledge about:

- Important characteristics that demarcate the Palestinian national identity in the views of teachers
- Whether the Palestinian curriculum promotes the Palestinian national identity from the teachers' perspective
- Whether the Palestinian curriculum in its current form constitutes an instrument for liberation from the teachers' perspectives
- Teachers' views on the geographical boundaries of the Palestinian state and whether it is presented in the Palestinian curriculum
- Teachers' views on whether the Israeli occupation of Palestine is addressed in the curriculum and if yes, how it is presented

### **Who is responsible for the research project?**

Masters' student Adham Ashqar; and Human Rights and Multiculturalism, Department of Culture, Religion and Social Science, USN are responsible for the project. The work on this paper is a contribution towards the fulfilment of the Master's program requirement.

Supervisor: Associate Professor Gabriela Mezzanotti, Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science.

Department of Culture, Religion and Social Science, USN.

### **What does participation involve for the teacher?**

I will conduct semi-structured interviews with teachers of the elementary stage in Gaza, Palestine. The interviews will be conducted online on Zoom. If the participant chooses to take part in the project, this will involve that he/she shares his/her views on whether the Palestinian curriculum contributes positively or negatively in promoting the concept of liberation and the Palestinian national identity. The questions will mainly be about the views of teachers on their understanding of the concept of liberation and the characteristics of the Palestinian national identity and whether the Palestinian curriculum is sufficient in addressing them.

The interviews will be recorded to ensure accuracy and efficiency of the analysis of the collected data.

### **Participation is voluntary**

Participation in the project is voluntary. If the participant chooses to participate, he/she can withdraw their consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about the participant

will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for the participant if he/she chooses not to participate or later decides to withdraw.

### **Your personal privacy and how I will store your consent form**

Any personal data that can identify the participant will be removed. I will process the data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- The participant will be sent a consent form via email
- The response of the participant on the consent form will not be stored together with any data that will be used in the research project

### **Your rights**

As long as the participant can be identified in the consent forms, he/she have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about him/her
- request that the personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of his/her personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of his/her personal data

### **What gives us the right to process your personal data?**

I will process the personal data based on the participant's consent.

Based on an agreement with USN, NSD (The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS) has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

### **Where can you find out more?**

If you have questions about the study, or want to exercise your rights, please contact:

- University of South-Eastern Norway via Adham Ashqar: aashqar60@gmail.com, +47 47740750, or Gabriela Mezzanotti. Gabriela.Mezzanotti@usn.no, +47 31 00 96 15
- Our privacy representative: Paal Are Solberg, +47 35 57 50 53/ +47 918 60 041, privacyrepresentative@usn.no

If you have questions related to NSD's assessment of the project, you can contact:

- NSD - Norwegian Center for Research Data AS by email (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by phone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,  
Adham Ashqar  
(Researcher)

## Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project *Palestinian Elementary School Curriculum as an Instrument for Liberation and Consolidation of National Identity: A Critical Freirean Study Based on Teachers' Perspectives in the Gaza Strip*. I have also been given the possibility to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in an online interview
- to have my voice recorded by the interviewer in the interview

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project, 28 February 2023.

Date:

Signature:



## Information letter (Arabic)

### تعريف بالمشروع

إلى الزميل/الزميلة مدرس مادة .....

### معلومات حول المشاركة في مشروع البحث

"منهج المدرسة الابتدائية الفلسطينية كأداة للتحريير وترسيخ الهوية الوطنية: دراسة نقدية تستند إلى وجهات نظر المعلمين في قطاع غزة"

انا اسمي أدهم تيسير الأشقر. أنا طالبة ماجستير في جامعة جنوب شرق النرويج [USN] / قسم الثقافة والدين والدراسات الاجتماعية في برنامج ماجستير يسمى حقوق الإنسان والتعددية الثقافية. أنا مدرس للغة الإنجليزية وأعمل في مدارس غوث وتشغيل اللاجئين الفلسطينيين في غزة منذ ما يقرب من 6 سنوات. اهتمامي الرئيسي بهذا المشروع هو حق الأطفال في تلقي تعليم ملائم وكاف يعزز وعيهم بهويتهم الوطنية وتلقي التعليم من أجل التحريير.

"وجد في عدد من الدراسات أن أهمية الهوية الوطنية للأطفال تزداد بشكل ملحوظ بين سن 5 و 11 سنة. وبالمثل، فإن اكتساب الأطفال للمعرفة الجغرافية الوطنية يرتبط بشكل إيجابي بإحساسهم بالهوية الوطنية".

يستكشف مشروع الماجستير الخاص بي وجهات نظر معلمي المدارس الابتدائية في فلسطين، مع غزة كدراسة حالة، حول بناء الهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية والتحرير في مناهج المدرسة الابتدائية، وأود أن أدعوكم للمشاركة في إنشاء هذا المشروع معي. سأقدم لك في هذه الرسالة معلومات حول الغرض من المشروع وما الذي ستشمله المشاركة.

### الغرض من المشروع البحثي

الهدف الرئيسي من هذه الورقة هو بحث دور المناهج الفلسطينية في تعزيز وعي أطفال المدارس الابتدائية بهويتهم الوطنية وتزويدهم بالتعليم من أجل التحريير. يأخذ هذا المشروع من آراء المعلمين في قطاع غزة مصدرًا رئيسيًا للمدخلات لتوليد هذه المعرفة. ستكون البيانات التي تم جمعها أساس المقالة المكتوبة وللنتائج المستخلصة. سيخلق المشروع البحثي معرفة حول:

- أهم الخصائص التي تميّز الهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية في آراء المعلمين
- ما إذا كان المنهاج الفلسطيني يعزز الهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية من وجهة نظر المعلمين
- ما إذا كان المنهاج الفلسطيني في شكله الحالي يشكل أداة للتحرر من وجهة نظر المعلمين
- آراء المعلمين حول الحدود الجغرافية للدولة الفلسطينية وما إذا كانت مطروحة في المناهج الدراسية الفلسطينية
- آراء المعلمين حول ما إذا كان يتم تناول الاحتلال الإسرائيلي لفلسطين في المناهج الدراسية، وإذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، فكيف يتم تقديمها

### من المسؤول عن مشروع البحث؟

طالب الماجستير أدهم تيسير الأشقر وتخصص حقوق الإنسان والتعددية الثقافية، قسم الثقافة والدين والعلوم الاجتماعية، جامعة جنوب شرق النرويج هي المسؤولة عن المشروع. العمل في هذه الورقة هو مساهمة في تلبية متطلبات برنامج الماجستير. المشرف: الأستاذة المشاركة غابرييلا ميزانوتي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية والرياضة والتربية. قسم الثقافة والدين والعلوم الاجتماعية، جامعة جنوب شرق النرويج (USN).

### ماذا تتضمن المشاركة بالنسبة للمعلم؟

سأجري مقابلات شبه منظمة مع معلمي المرحلة الابتدائية في غزة، فلسطين. سيتم إجراء المقابلات عبر الإنترنت على برنامج Zoom. إذا اختار المشارك المشاركة في المشروع، فسيضمن ذلك مشاركته/بأرائه/أ حول ما إذا كان المنهاج الفلسطيني يساهم

بشكل إيجابي أو سلبي في تعزيز مفهوم التحرير والهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية. ستكون الأسئلة بشكل أساسي حول آراء المعلمين حول فهمهم لمفهوم التحرير وخصائص الهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية وما إذا كانت المناهج الفلسطينية كافية لمخاطبتها. سيتم تسجيل المقابلات لضمان دقة وكفاءة تحليل البيانات التي تم جمعها.

### المشاركة طوعية

المشاركة في المشروع طوعية. إذا اختار المشارك المشاركة، يمكنه/ا سحب موافقته/ا في أي وقت دون إبداء سبب. سيتم بعد ذلك جعل جميع المعلومات المتعلقة بالمشارك مجهولة. لن تكون هناك عواقب سلبية على المشارك إذا اختار عدم المشاركة أو قرر لاحقًا الانسحاب.

### خصوصيتك الشخصية وكيف سأحتفظ بنموذج موافقتك

ستتم إزالة أي بيانات شخصية يمكن أن تحدد هوية المشارك. سأقوم بمعالجة البيانات بسرية ووفقًا لتشريعات حماية البيانات (اللائحة العامة لحماية البيانات وقانون البيانات الشخصية).

- سيتم إرسال نموذج الموافقة إلى المشارك عبر البريد الإلكتروني
- لن يتم تخزين رد المشارك على نموذج الموافقة مع أي بيانات سيتم استخدامها في مشروع البحث

### حقوقك

طالما يمكن تحديد المشارك في نماذج الموافقة، فإنه يحق له/ا:

- الوصول إلى البيانات الشخصية التي تتم معالجتها عنه/ا
  - طلب حذف البيانات الشخصية
  - طلب تصحيح أو تعديل البيانات الشخصية غير الصحيحة
  - استلام نسخة من بياناته الشخصية (قابلية نقل البيانات)
  - إرسال شكوى إلى مسؤول حماية البيانات أو هيئة حماية البيانات النرويجية بخصوص معالجة بياناته الشخصية
- ما الذي يمنحنا الحق في معالجة بياناتك الشخصية؟**
- سأعالج البيانات الشخصية بناءً على موافقة المشارك.

بناءً على اتفاقية مع USN، قِيمَ NSD (المركز النرويجي لبيانات البحث) أن معالجة البيانات الشخصية في هذا المشروع تتوافق مع تشريعات حماية البيانات.

### أين يمكنك معرفة المزيد؟

إذا كانت لديك أسئلة حول الدراسة، أو تريد ممارسة حقوقك، فيرجى الاتصال بـ:

- جامعة جنوب شرق النرويج عبر: أدهم تيسير الأشقر: [aashqar60@gmail.com](mailto:aashqar60@gmail.com) / +47 47740750
- أو غابرييلا ميزانوتي: [Gabriela.Mezzanotti@usn.no](mailto:Gabriela.Mezzanotti@usn.no) / +47 31 00 96 15
- ممثل الخصوصية لدينا: بال آرة سولبرج: +47918 60 041 / +47 35 57 50 53

[privacyrepresentative@usn.no](mailto:privacyrepresentative@usn.no)

إذا كانت لديك أسئلة تتعلق بتقييم NSD للمشروع، يمكنك الاتصال بـ:

- NSD - المركز النرويجي لبيانات البحث عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني ([personverntjenester@nsd.no](mailto:personverntjenester@nsd.no)) أو عبر الهاتف: +47 17 21 58 55

تفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام،



## Consent form (Arabic)

### نموذج الموافقة

لقد تلقيت وفهمت معلومات حول مشروع "منهج المدرسة الابتدائية الفلسطينية كأداة للتحرير وترسيخ الهوية الوطنية: دراسة نقدية تستند إلى وجهات نظر المعلمين في قطاع غزة" كما أتيت لي إمكانية طرح الأسئلة. أعطي موافقتي:

للمشاركة في مقابلة عبر الإنترنت

أن يسجل المحاور صوتي في المقابلة

أوافق على معالجة بياناتي الشخصية حتى نهاية المشروع، 28 فبراير 2023.

تاريخ:

التوقيع:

## Interview guide

### *Palestinian Elementary School Curriculum as an Instrument for Liberation and Consolidation of National Identity: A Critical Freirean Study Based on Teachers' Perspectives in the Gaza Strip*

#### Interview guide

- **Greeting, introduce myself and my project**

The researcher greets the participant, thanks him/her for choosing to participate in the project, and gives information about the project.

- **Gender, age, grade, teaching subject and for how long the participant has been teaching it**

The researcher asks the informant which subject he/she teaches and for how long he/she has been teaching it.

- **The presentation of the geography of Palestine in the curriculum**

What's the geographical boundaries of Palestine in the perception of the participant? Does what the curriculum presents go in conformity with the teacher's perspective?

- **The presentation of the Palestinian national identity in the curriculum**

What are the most important characteristics that demarcate the Palestinian national identity? Is it presented in the curriculum you teach? How?

- **The presentation of Palestine in relation with the current occupation**

What is your perception of the Israeli occupation? Do you recognise it as a neighbouring state? Is this issue tackled by the curriculum? If yes, how?

- **Education for the achievement of freedom and liberation**

- Do you think that this curriculum contribute to the collective will of Palestinians to achieve freedom and liberation from the occupation? Elaborate.

- How do you perceive the role of education shaping the future of Palestine?

- Would you consider education a tool to social change? How? Could you please give examples from your everyday teachings?

- Would you consider the curriculum a tool for an emancipatory education in Palestine? If not, why would that be?

- In your view, what are the main challenges to implementing a emancipatory education (education and resistance)?

- How would you describe Palestine's national identity? What are the relations between this identity and education? Is the curriculum an important tool shaping Youth's national identity? Can you please give me examples from your teaching experiences?

### **Role of the exams in guiding the traditional educational process**

- What are the criteria used to assess the students' achievement? What's the weigh of the marks of the final exam in students' achievement record? Do you get to choose the questions of the final exams?
- When you prepare for your lessons, what is the main source that helps you set the aims for the class?
- Do the exams play a role in your preparation for the lessons?
- Do students get to choose what they want to learn? Do they contribute in decision making over what they want to learn?
- Do teachers have the possibility to choose what they want to teach to their students? Are teachers involved in the formation of the curriculum?
- Does the content of the curriculum promote emancipation, independence, national identity, creativity and critical thinking?
- Do you think the education policy followed in Palestine address local Palestinian vision, or a collection of foreign programmes? Is it relevant to the Palestinian context? Do you consider it a libertarian form of education or neutral submissive one?
- From your point of view, is the Palestinian education policy based on dialogue or is it an authoritative one?

### **Occupation**

- Is the occupation mentioned in the curriculum? How?
- Are there clear mechanisms to resist this occupation? What's the national plan (in the curriculum)?
- Are the challenges of establishing a Palestinian state mentioned/discussed in the curriculum? How?
- Balfour declaration? British occupation? Zionism? Intifadas? Revolutions? Palestinian icons (martyrs)?

### **Suggestions**

- What would you change? How?
- Is there a possibility (a window) to give your suggestion as a teacher for reform?

- What would you like to add? What would you like your child to learn more at school?
- Does this curriculum represent/serve the will and spirit of all Palestinians, or only the ruling power structure?
- Does the curriculum encourage learners to research on topics related to the Palestinian history, culture and identity?
- In your opinion, what is the collective memory the curriculum activates?
- In your opinion, does the curriculum invite learners to research on the history of Palestine?
- Does the curriculum provide national content relevant to students' reality and lived experiences?
- Does the curriculum evoke critical reflection of the teacher and students that helps in educating about the true Palestinian culture and nationalism?
- What do you think of the generous support provided by Western donor countries for education in Palestine? Does this support contribute, in your opinion, to the progress or delay of education for liberation?
- Does the content of the Palestinian curriculum contribute to promote students' awareness about their cause, history, and thinking about the future, or does it make them absent from reality, the history of their cause, and thinking about the future?
- Do you believe that Palestinians are oppressed?
- What are the possible ways to stop this oppression?
- Can education be among these ways? How?
- Do you think that we should start teaching Nakba?

## Interview guide (Arabic)

منهج المدرسة الابتدائية الفلسطينية كأداة لتحرير وترسيخ الهوية الوطنية: دراسة نقدية مبنية على وجهات نظر المعلمين في قطاع غزة

### دليل مقابلة

- تحية، أقدم نفسي ومشروعي

يحبي الباحث المشارك ويشكره على اختياره للمشاركة في المشروع ويعطي معلومات عن المشروع.

- الجنس، والعمر، والصف، والمادة التدريسية، والمدة التي قضاها المشارك في تدريسها

يسأل الباحث المخبر عن المادة التي يدرسها ومدة تدريسها.

- عرض جغرافية فلسطين في المناهج الدراسية

ما هي الحدود الجغرافية لفلسطين في تصور المشارك؟ هل ما يقدمه المنهج يتوافق مع منظور المعلم؟

- عرض الهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية في المناهج الدراسية

ما هي أهم الخصائص التي تحدد الهوية الوطنية الفلسطينية؟ هل يتم تقديمها في المناهج التي تدرسها؟ كيف؟

- عرض فلسطين فيما يتعلق بالاحتلال الحالي

ما هو مفهومك عن الاحتلال الإسرائيلي؟ هل تعترف بها كدولة مجاورة؟ هل تم تناول هذه القضية من خلال المناهج؟ إذا كانت

الإجابة نعم، فكيف؟

- التربية لتحقيق الحرية والتحرير

هل تعتقد أن هذا المنهج يساهم في الإرادة الجماعية للفلسطينيين في تحقيق الحرية والتحرر من الاحتلال؟ توضيح.

- كيف ترى دور التعليم في تشكيل مستقبل فلسطين؟

- هل تعتبر التعليم أداة للتغيير الاجتماعي؟ كيف؟ هل يمكنك إعطاء أمثلة من تعاليمك اليومية؟

- هل تعتبر المنهج أداة للتعليم التحرري في فلسطين؟ إذا لم يكن كذلك، فلماذا يكون ذلك؟

- ما هي برأيك التحديات الرئيسية لتطبيق التربية التحررية (التربية والمقاومة)؟

- كيف تصف الهوية الوطنية لفلسطين؟ ما هي العلاقات بين هذه الهوية والتعليم؟ هل المناهج الدراسية أداة مهمة في تشكيل الهوية

الوطنية للشباب؟ هل يمكنك أن تعطيني أمثلة من خبراتك التعليمية؟

دور الامتحانات في توجيه العملية التعليمية التقليدية

- ما هي المعايير المستخدمة في تقييم تحصيل الطلاب؟ ما هو وزن علامات الامتحان النهائي في سجل تحصيل الطلاب؟ هل يحق

لك اختيار أسئلة الامتحانات النهائية؟

- عندما تستعد للدروس، ما هو المصدر الرئيسي الذي يساعدك على تحديد أهداف الفصل؟

- هل تلعب الاختبارات دورًا في تحضيرك للدروس؟

- هل يختار الطلاب ما يريدون تعلمه؟ هل يساهمون في اتخاذ القرار بشأن ما يريدون تعلمه؟

- هل للمدرسين إمكانية اختيار ما يريدون تدريسه لطلابهم؟ هل يشارك المعلمون في تشكيل المنهج؟

- هل محتوى المنهج يعزز الانعتاق والاستقلال والهوية الوطنية والإبداع والتفكير النقدي؟



- هل تعتقد أن سياسة التعليم المتبعة في فلسطين تخاطب رؤية فلسطينية محلية أم مجموعة برامج خارجية؟ هل هو وثيق الصلة بالسياق الفلسطيني؟ هل تعتبره شكلاً من أشكال التعليم التحرري أم نوعاً خاضعاً محايداً؟
- من وجهة نظرك، هل سياسة التعليم الفلسطينية تقوم على الحوار أم أنها سياسة موثوقة؟

### احتلال

- هل الاحتلال المذكور في المنهج؟ كيف؟
- هل هناك آليات واضحة لمقاومة هذا الاحتلال؟ ما هي الخطة الوطنية (في المناهج)؟
- هل تحديات إقامة الدولة الفلسطينية المذكورة / تناقض في المناهج الدراسية؟ كيف؟
- وعد بلفور؟ الاحتلال البريطاني؟ صهيونية؟ انتفاضات؟ ثورات؟ أيقونات فلسطينية (شهداء)؟
- هل يمثل هذا المنهج / يخدم إرادة وروح جميع الفلسطينيين، أم فقط هيكل السلطة الحاكمة؟
- هل يشجع المنهج المتعلمين على البحث في مواضيع تتعلق بالتاريخ والثقافة والهوية الفلسطينية؟
- ما هي في رأيك الذاكرة الجماعية التي ينشطها المنهج؟
- في رأيك، هل المنهج يدعو المتعلمين للبحث في تاريخ فلسطين؟
- هل يوفر المنهج محتوى وطنياً ذا صلة بواقع الطلاب وخبراتهم المعيشية؟
- هل يثير المنهج انعكاساً نقدياً للمعلم والطلاب يساعد في تنقيحهم حول الثقافة والقومية الفلسطينية الحقيقية؟
- ما رأيك بالدعم السخي الذي تقدمه الدول الغربية المانحة للتعليم في فلسطين، هل يسهم هذا الدعم في رأيك في تقدم أو تأخر التعليم من أجل التحرير؟
- هل يسهم محتوى المنهج الفلسطيني في توعية الطلاب بقضيتهم وتاريخهم والتفكير في المستقبل أم في تغييبهم عن الواقع وتاريخ قضيتهم والتفكير في المستقبل؟
- من الجهة التي تصمم المنهج ومحتواه؟ هل هناك سياسات تحكم ما يمكن أن يكون وما لا يمكن أن يكون في المنهج؟ هل تعتقد أن مصممو المنهج لديهم الحرية لإنتاج منهاج يعبر عن روح وطنية حقيقية أم أنه محكوم بسياسات معينة؟
- هل أنت راضٍ عن المنهج؟

### اقتراحات

- ماذا تريد ان تغير؟ كيف؟
- هل هناك إمكانية (نافذة) لتقديم اقتراحك كمدرس للإصلاح؟
- ماذا تريد أن تضيف؟ ماذا تريد أن يتعلم طفلك أكثر في المدرسة؟