“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

Reviewing Education in Palestine
In this issue

Reviewing Education in Palestine

Inside the small rooms of This Week in Palestine we started to call this November issue on reviewing education a benchmark as soon as the idea hit us. It is a leap in our aspirations to push the magazine’s content, look, and role in our society to a whole new level.

Palestinians have placed a lot of value and hope on this subject. Education was at one time THE commodity to invest in for the future of Palestinian families after the loss of their houses, properties, lands, and natural habitats during Al-Nakba, the forced exodus. Palestine used to be a thriving place for education, which is reflected in the following pages through a new and interesting research project conducted by Jehad Alshwaikh. Also, during the first Intifada, Palestinians came up with their own flexible and practical form of education, which is the subject of an important article we have for you by Alessandro Petti.

At present, however, education has become a topic shrouded in controversy. The system has not been producing the results it promised. So we decided that it was time to take a fresh look at education in Palestine and pose a few questions. Is knowledge really the focal point of our educational system? How does Palestinian education compare with educational advancements around the world?

We sought out the most prolific and professional writers on education to give us their views and suggestions on how to move forward. We have also highlighted several special cases within Palestinian society and challenged conventional ideas about learning.

With change comes fear; but “nothing diminishes anxiety faster than action,” as Walter Anderson puts it. So we hope that you’ll enjoy reading this issue as much as we’ve enjoyed producing it.

We also hope that this will be another step forward for This Week in Palestine as we strive to serve our communities and reach new realms in the constant journey towards excellence.

Ahmad Damen
Content Editor
The Gorgeous Robe of Our King

Trying to Undress our School System

By Aref Hijjawi

As I write about our educational system I find myself at a Y-shaped crossroads; I can hurl curses (an enjoyable task for both writer and reader), or dream of some utopia of a system, or start from the time-honoured adage of Abu Hamid Al Ghazali: “You cannot improve on perfection.”

I will take all three roads, starting with the latter.

Schools in England and Germany looked the other way and continued to teach two dead languages as the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. It took the little child of the fairy tale some two hundred years to shout: “The king is naked!” So why are we so ashamed that our schools keep teaching loads of pre-Islamic verses?

The British needed an extra century to discover that English grammar does not make you understand better or write better. It can’t even prevent you from continuing to unconsciously split your infinitives. They abolished the grammar lesson. The myth that a good knowledge of Arabic grammar is essential for understanding the language is so deeply rooted that only a “the-king-is-naked” argument suits it.

Human beings teach their offspring all sorts of things, not only to make them more enlightened but also to discipline them and protect them from their own mischief. Conscripts in some Arab armies are ordered to dig trenches all day, only to have to fill them in the next day.

We spent 1,250 years, from the days of Seebawayh, unable to expose the folly. A human mind is 5 percent intelligence, 95 percent basalt. Consider the case of a professional translator who must, in order to be a good translator, refrain from judging the original. The original text is holy, and the translator’s task is to turn it, as honestly as humanly possible, into the other language. Our educational system, pointing its finger towards the horizon, tells our children: “See that point over there? See the end-of-school exam, the tawjihi? That’s it. Now run.” There is no room for thinking outside the curricula. The text is holy.

Teachers are like their pupils, like translators. The textbook says World War II started in 1940, so the teacher looks upon the thousand-and-one books that state that the war actually started in 1939 as witchcraft relics that must be burned in public.

There is something good in that. Give the army of teachers in our educational system good textbooks and go to sleep. This army is very disciplined and takes things at face value. This is both good and bad, but it is a good starting point.

Whereas it is a little reassuring for us to know that the English and the Germans have also committed stupidities in the past, it is worth considering that the world rhythm now is much faster. We cannot afford two centuries to remove the dead wood from our system.

Fifty years ago, when I started school, something in the air, or maybe in the water, injected into my head the idea that gaining information is all that I needed to be an ok human being. Come
and see me now telling my students that the best thing they can do is read books. Come and see stupid me insisting that knowledge is all that we need. Even Pavlov’s dog could change the code in its small, but innocent, mind. Human beings are slaves to dogma. They need to work hard to change their beliefs. My failures as a teacher continue to haunt me.

Let us move to the section of cursing. You should have seen our minister of education as he proudly announced that the number of new textbooks was slashed by nearly one third. That was good for him there and then. But here and now, we need real learning. We also need to compel pupils to memorise certain things by heart. As the reader starts to feel a change of heart on my side, I have to give some explanation.

A baby learns his mother tongue not by his intellect but by memorising the words and phrases. We all learn our culture and food recipes by memory. A philosopher will not produce a decent falafel sandwich. The real force that makes people learn things is two-fold: need and zeal. You can easily introduce certain zeal into the heart of a child.

Ahmad Shawqi, the Amir of Poets, wrote hundreds of poems using old Abbasid Arabic. He spent his life imitating al-Buhturi and al-Mutanabbi, and was able to impress his contemporaries. But how come this man of non-Arab origins, who worked from age 17 as a French translator for the Khedive of Egypt, and who studied law in France, and spent his holidays later in Istanbul speaking the language of the empire, should be so passionate about old Arabic? It took me quite a bit of research to find out that at age four he was dumped at Sheikh Ali’s kuttab in Cairo for some years, before moving on to the Tjihiziyya modern school. There, in the kuttab, he caught the virus. In the formative years a person gets programmed. That is zeal.

We stay with Shawqi. He went to Paris when he was 19. There he discovered Lamartine’s fables. He thought Arab children “needed” something like that (this he wrote in prose in the introduction to the first edition of his Diwan – collection). He wrote many such poems in simple language that contained hidden messages.

Out of sheer curiosity I read a good translation of Lamartine’s fables and, to my extreme shock of joy, discovered that our Ahmad Shawqi was not only more entertaining, far better at cracking a joke, and more able to convey the subtlest messages, but he also did not steal a single theme or tale from his French counterpart. Generations of children – from Mauritania (and I checked that) to Kuwait – read the fables of Shawqi at school. Al Aqqad, his arch-enemy, claimed that they were the only original poems that Shawqi had ever written. Possibly not the only, but they were, I believe, the most original.

When zeal and need work together, learning starts to make sense.

Teachers in my ideal school will be the story, the hands, and the fingers. Arabic, English, chemistry, history, planting tomatoes, making a table, doing crosswords puzzles, cooking, playing the lute, etc. will all be learned using the afore-mentioned teachers, while the teachers you have in mind will come in during the last three years of school. They will help students specialise in whatever branches they choose and help prepare them to sit for whatever exams they need for admittance to university. Most students will drop out before this specialisation
phase in order to focus on manual labour or to become geniuses. Competition will be kept to a minimum. A school is not a war zone. Working together and enjoying learning is more effective and more fun than competition. While each invention of yesterday was attributed to a single person, today’s inventions are created by teams. Can you tell me the name of the person who put the first man on the moon?

My leaving out religion was intentional. Schools can be good or bad at giving children an idea about life, but the afterlife should be left to the parents.

In my school there is a balance between the amount of knowledge and experience that students can absorb and the level of their appetite.

Palestinian society is more than ready for such an educational system. But Palestinian politicians and educators still talk about the old times when education was “strong” and teachers made them memorise by heart all the rules of the past participle, and taught them Arabic grammar from thick books. Well, listen to them stutter in both languages now.

One last observation: After looking carefully at the way the new Palestinian textbooks teach Arabic grammar, I would say that the old thick books were much better.

But that’s another story.

Aref Hijjawi was born in Nablus, Palestine, in 1956. He’s married and the father of two daughters. Aref studied Arabic at Birzeit University and was a schoolteacher for four years. He worked for the BBC for ten years, Aljazeera for seven, and in between he worked for the Media Institute at Birzeit University for six years. Aref was editor of Alhayat Aljadida Daily for six months. He can be reached at arefhijjawi@hotmail.com.
Healing from Modern Superstitions

By Munir Fasheh (healed teacher and educator)

Reviewing education

Re-viewing education means to view again, not only what is visible about it but also, more importantly, what is invisible; to dig deep into foundations and the underlying logic. This is what I have been doing since 1971, which convinced me that modern education is not about learning but about winning and control (control of minds, perceptions, actions, and relationships). Official education (especially math, which I studied and taught for many years) has been crucial in this control. As Palestinians, we have been living for many decades under occupation of the land, but we seem to be totally unaware of another occupation: that of the mind. Whereas the first occupation is done via military tanks, the second takes place via think tanks. Control and occupation of the second kind happen via words whose meanings do not stem from life but from licensed institutions and professionals; they also happen by using numbers to measure the worth of people through comparing them on a vertical line (grading, which is degrading). Words that embody inequality are crucial in domination; especially inequality in intelligence. This onslaught on human dignity and intelligence is accepted today as something normal. The disease is very deep, permeating all levels. Ranking universities is a disgrace to the concept of a university. The main logic taught in schools is the two-valued logic (true-false) and is part of math curricula in most if not all countries. What is kept invisible is the fact that this logic has no application in life except in relation to control and the world of machines. It is translated, for example, in general exams at the end of the twelve-year school cycle by giving every student a certificate that labels her/him a “success” or a “failure.” I don’t know of any Ministry of Education that gives a certificate stating that a person is a poet, a storyteller, a drummer, or a gardener.

Official education is not about learning but about control and winning. This has to stop; bas! enough. We cannot continue in a drugged stupor, believing that people’s worthiness can be measured by numbers claiming that they reflect something real – other than the readiness to follow instructions. Almost all aspects of life (as a result of modern knowledge) have been corrupted or poisoned: food, drink, soil, air, sea, entertainment, and relationships – not because of ignorance but as a result of planning. Until I was in my early twenties, I used to eat four raw eggs every day; science was not yet advanced enough to corrupt eggs. Now I don’t dare eat one!

This article distinguishes between two kinds of words: those whose purpose is to control, distract, and deform; and those that are rich in meaning and rooted in life, community, and culture, and in harmony with living wisely. Whereas the first need superstitions, the second need to reclaim words that have been ignored or belittled by modern ideology.

Shattering myths

At the peak of my career as a math teacher/educator (mid-1970s), I realised for the first time that my illiterate mother was all her life an “illiterate mathematician” (as Richard Noss, Institute of Education, University of London described her after a talk I gave). My realisation of my mother’s math was an “intellectual earthquake” that shattered the myths I had acquired in schools and universities. Her story appeared first in my doctoral dissertation, then in an article published in the Harvard Educational Review. Much of what I have written, spoken about, and done since then has been inspired by that realisation. In 1977, I was head supervisor of math education in West Bank schools, and teaching math at Birzeit and Bethlehem universities, and I was recognised as a distinguished math teacher and educator. Since 1976, when I first realised that my illiterate mother was practicing math in a way that was impossible for me to understand and do, her world saved me from modern
superiority and inferiority rather than equality, justice, usefulness, and living in harmony with nature as was the purpose of math in earlier times. My realisation of my mother’s math healed me from the claim that math requires a higher intelligence than that needed to make a dress, write a poem, farm a field, raise a child, sail a boat, play a drum, or create a happy home. Cutting a rectangular piece of cloth into pieces and forming a new whole that fits the body of the woman who brought that cloth (which my mother did daily) was beyond my ability to comprehend. Whereas I studied and taught geometry that consisted of points, straight lines, triangles, circles, parabolas, etc., my mother – during a 50-year period – made thousands of dresses that fit numerous women, each with her own geometry! She never needed the two-valued logic or geometric set; she only needed a measuring tape. Whereas my math is dogmatically precise, hers was flexibly precise, and whereas my knowledge claims to be universal, my mother’s knowledge formed a universe – a harmonious one rooted in life and community.

Until the 1970s, I believed that my job was to transmit my knowledge to students and bring them to my level. However, the times I felt I was best as a teacher were when I did not have a subject matter that I was required to teach. This happened many times in my life (which led me to refuse to teach starting with the first Intifada) in various settings since 1971: math and science clubs in schools; Math in the Other Direction (a course I introduced at Birzeit University in 1979 for first-year science students); Tamer Institute; the Arab Education Forum; working with women in Shufat Refugee Camp and with young men and women in Dheisheh Refugee Camp, and currently with various groups. When people ask, “What did you teach young men and women in Dheisheh?” I say, “Nothing; that’s why they learned a lot, in freedom, personally and communally.”

Just think: with the exception of only a few, every Arab child (regardless of skin colour, gender, religion, or social and economic background) by the age of three or four speaks Arabic fluently – without textbooks, pedagogy, or evaluation. There is hardly a subject more complex than Arabic, yet children learn it at an early age. All they need is a rich, lively, interactive environment. This fact shatters three myths: the myth of inequality, the myth that learning needs teaching, and the myth that children need to move from the simple to the complex and from one grade to another. As Palestinians, we don’t have political-social-economic-legal equality; however, we can live and practice, here and now, equality in intelligence. What is significant about this equality is that we don’t demand it; we just practice it. No one can stop us; the only obstacle is if we believe in inequality. Imagine what would happen if we started treating children in accordance with the faith that they are equal in intelligence and able to learn without teaching! How wonderful, liberating, energising, and creative that would be! It could be our gift to children around the world who suffer from the myth of inequality, which is used as a basis for racism and subduing people.

Healing from modern superstitions

A fundamental challenge that we face in the world today is how to free ourselves from modern myths and superstitions such as the ones mentioned above. The myth that links technological advancement with human progress deforms us. The progress of Western civilisation has been at the level of tools, not life. Hardly any aspect in life has improved in essence. Schools plant seeds of inequality and powerlessness in children’s minds. A basic task of official education, world organisations, and experts is to make the past look obsolete, backward, and out of date. What I mean by equality of intelligence is that it is a non-commensurable quality of humans. It is probably hard for most people to accept what I am saying simply because we have been drugged to perceive modern myths as progress and true. Sitting on our behinds for 12 years and looking at meaningless words (on boards, papers, and screens), with no action and no context, and calling that learning, has caused much harm. Myths existed in other civilisations, but the modern one is the first to measure intelligence, one’s worthiness, and a country’s development using numbers – and to claim that such measures reflect reality.

The flush toilet as an embodiment of modernity

Western civilisation is the first to refer to itself as modern. That’s why experts who want to be promoted go out of their way to prove that the past is out of date. No doubt, Western civilisation has excelled in inventing tools; however, most tools lead to laziness and unwise living, and have contributed to threats and crises. If we compare what we have gained and lost from sciences, our losses are much greater. I will choose the flush toilet to illustrate.

No doubt, the flush toilet was a great scientific invention but devoid of wisdom. It flushes away precious and scarce water, and precious excrement (which should go back to the soil) and pollutes the environment. We lose all that in order for the toilet to look clean! It is absurd, and in a place like Palestine, criminal. The flush toilet is not in harmony with the cycle of life and the spirit of regeneration. For those who ask about alternatives, I say there are many, but they are kept out of awareness because companies cannot make money from them. I first experienced it for ten days in a friend’s home in Mexico in 2001 (where I didn’t use water, where there was no smell, and where things that were taken from the soil go back to it). It is called a “dry latrine.” Laziness and obsession with looks make us admire the flush toilet but blind us to its disastrous consequences. This is similar to what modern education does: it flushes away useful, meaningful, rooted knowledge and sustainable lifestyles, and it flushes away wisdom as a guide to thought and action.
Healing from modern myths via rooted words

Words that were flushed away by “knowledge flush-toilets” include mujaawarah, مجاورة, and muthanna, مثنى. (Stories as a medium of learning and social weaving are also flushed away; however, they deserve an entire article devoted to them.) The three words are basic in healing. We don't need verbal empires to deal with academic empires. A thousand years ago, Al-Naffari wrote, “The wider the vision, the fewer the words needed to express it.” The vision embedded here can be expressed as “equality in intelligence.”

Mujaawarah

Mujaawarah refers to any group of people who decide, in freedom, to meet regularly in their quest to understand and act on an issue in their lives, with no internal or external authority. A basic aspect in mujaawarah is personal and communal freedom to learn and act. This was true about great centres of learning throughout history: the library of Alexandria, Gundeshapur, Cordoba, and House of Wisdom. Mujaawarah cannot be a model; each one grows in accordance with its inner dynamics and interaction with the surroundings. I would like to choose “neighbourhood committees” that sprang up spontaneously during the first Intifada as a manifestation of mujaawarah. I want to focus on how Israel reacted. Whereas it did not mind that conferences were held to condemn the closure of schools and universities and to demand their re-opening, it could not tolerate neighbourhood committees at all. It took me a while to figure out why communal farming or neighbourhood learning is more dangerous than international conferences. The threat is in the medium. Whereas licensed individuals and organisations are the medium in conferences, the medium in neighbourhood committees consisted of people who thought, learned, and acted in freedom, personally and communally, and who were attentive to their surroundings and to what they could do with what they have. That led me to publish an article in al-Quds newspaper with the title “Freedom of Thought and Expression OR Freeing Thought and Expression?” The deeper freedom is the one that frees our thinking and expression from dominant discourse, meanings, and perceptions.

Yuhsen

Imam Ali’s statement, “the worth of a person is what s/he yuhsen” (what the person does well, useful, beautiful, giving, and respectful) is what I suggest as a basis for a person’s worth. I first read the statement in 1998, when I established the Arab Education Forum within the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. I read it in Aljahiz’ book “albayan wattabyeen” (which was written 1,200 years ago). I don’t remember that I ever experienced being one or many; I always feel that I am made of muthannas.” Muthanna refers to a relation between two persons that becomes very important in the lives of both, and yet has a life of its own. It is neither legal nor intellectual nor economic nor social; it develops freely between the two. It is neither a couple nor dual – although the latter is usually used to refer to it. Muthanna does not perceive the other as non-I or as a person that is a copy of I, or a higher synthesis of both. Each person remains who s/he is but a relation...
develops that becomes important to both. In this sense, it embodies a logic that is different from that of both Aristotle and Hegel. The “other” is a “you” rather than a non-I or a copy of I or a higher synthesis with I. It is also different from the logic of Descartes, who said “I think, therefore I am.” In the logic of muthanna, “YOU are, therefore I am” – my existence depends on my relation with you. That’s why I believe that without muthanna, it is difficult to develop a healthy pluralistic attitude in living. This explains why a person like Samuel Huntington oscillates between conflict and integration; the limitation in his mind is due to the lack of muthanna in his language.

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In short, mujaawarahs are an alternative to controlling institutions; yuhsen alternative to degrading evaluation; and muthanna alternative to “the other.” The three words embody equality of intelligence, learning without teaching, the belief that a person’s worth is incommensurable with that of others, the personal and communal responsibility to learn, and being in harmony with the spirit of regeneration. They are crucial in liberating people from modern illusions.

Although I am writing this article for This Week in Palestine, I hope it continues to be a main concern “this year in Palestine” (and beyond) until every child in Palestine is free from the onslaught of the most dangerous inequality.

In today’s world, most of us need to live two lives (at least for a while): one in the dominant world and the other in harmony with well-being and with one’s passion in life. What I said above may sound unrealistic or idealistic. It is not possible in a short article to elaborate on any claim I made, but I am ready to meet with any group to further discuss any idea.

We need courage to think of simple solutions (meaning available to all). Ending the tyranny of a single universal medium/path for learning is crucial to human survival. We need to reclaim part of the educational budget and use it in diverse mediums.

When a body gets sick, the healthy part rushes to start healing it. Without the healthy part, physicians and medicines cannot do it. Similarly, in order for societies and cultures to heal, we need to build on what is healthy in them. The three words mentioned above form part of what is healthy in Arab culture. Reclaiming them in our daily living reveals the beauty in Arab culture and invites others to reveal the beauty in theirs.

Dr. Munir Fasheh was born in Jerusalem in 1941 and was expelled with his family in the 1948 Nakba. He has spent the first half of his life in educational illusions and the second half of his life struggling to free himself from such illusions, mainly through sources of strength such as his community and the Palestinian experience and culture – especially Arabic words that are rich in meanings and wisdom.
The Terra Sancta International Organ Festival
in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and Al-Qubeibeh
(Emmaus)
Palestine
November 5 – 28, 2014

The Terra Sancta Organ Festival (Holy Land Organ Festival) is an international music event and a cultural activity produced by the Custody of the Holy Land, which allows everyone to enjoy the beauty of its pipe organs, an asset that would otherwise be restricted to Latin Catholics in their liturgies.

The first edition of the festival will take place in Palestine and Israel starting November 5 and continuing until November 28, 2014. A “prelude” to the event was held on the Greek island of Rhodes from September 30 to October 4.

The Terra Sancta Organ Festival is the only music festival that takes place in various countries. Starting with Greece, Israel, and Palestine, the festival will eventually reach the other places where the Custody of the Holy Land has a presence: Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus, Egypt, and … Syria (inshallah).

The organists are all internationally known personalities: American Mark Pacoe (organist and music director of the Church of St. Malachy in Times Square in New York), Germans Ulrich Pakusch (organist and music director of the Basilica of Werl) and Axel Flierl (organist and choir director of St. Peter and Paul Basilica in Dillingen an der Donau, Bavaria), and Italian Eugenio Maria Fagiani (organist in the Giuseppe Verdi Symphony Orchestra of Milan).

To announce the event, the website www.tsorganfestival.org has been launched.

The concerts of the festival will take place every Wednesday in Nazareth (November 5, 12, 19, 26, at the Basilica of the Annunciation, 6:00 p.m.), every Friday in Bethlehem (November 7, 14, 21, 28, at the Church of St. Catherine, Basilica of the Nativity, 6:00 p.m.). The entrance to all concerts is free of charge.

A special concert on a small but prestigious pipe organ housed in a wonderful and special location will take place on Sunday, November 23, in the Franciscan Church of Al-Qubeibeh (Emmaus), at 12:00 noon. A picnic will be held after the concert. If you would like to join us, please bring your own food.

Al-Qubeibeh, is particularly dear to the Custody of the Holy Land. One of the Gospel’s most fascinating stories is set in this location: that of the Disciples of Emmaus (Lk. 24:13–35). Today, due to the political instability of the region, the roads and access points to the village change from year to year, thus isolating the Franciscan monastery and the Sanctuary, which until recently were regular stops on pilgrimage itineraries in the Holy Land. For this reason, the festival programme includes Emmaus Al-Qubeibeh right from its first edition, as an act of solidarity with the Franciscans, the nuns, and the people who live there permanently, and to remind everyone of the holiness, the beauty, and the dignity of this place.

Established in the year 1342, The Custody of the Holy Land is a special and international mission of the Catholic Church, a part of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans) in the Middle East. The Custody of the Holy Land is also a diplomatic entity recognised by many countries and institutions.
Why I Left School and Never Went Back!

By Ahmad Damen

I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.”

Mark Twain (1835–1910)

Our home phone rang one September morning and my mother picked it up. It was the school principal asking why I hadn’t come to school at the start of the semester.

“Did you transfer him to another school?”

My mother put the phone to her chest, looked at me, and asked: “Are you sure you want to do this? This is your last chance to back away.”

“I’m sure,” I replied without the slightest bit of hesitation or regret.

She spoke to the principal again and said: “I’m sorry, but my son has decided he’s not going back to school anymore and I support him all the way.”

“What do you mean he’s not coming back?!” asked the principal. “He’s one of our top students. Tell him I’ll make sure he won’t be bullied anymore here.”

“No, you don’t get it. It’s not really about the bullying,” my mother replied. “He’s not going to go to ANY other school. I will make sure he gets the best education here at home.”

The principal laughed at this ridiculous claim and tried her best to learn the name of the new school that I was transferring to.

This conversation could be interpreted as the setting of a fictitious situation or a wishful thought in some child’s fantasy world, but this happened for real, down to the smallest detail. This is a story about something much more important and real than anything that’s taught in schools today; a story about reclaiming education as a tool for seeking and acquiring knowledge. The school system has been obsolete for a long time now, but we still like to engage in the same old habits even if they are no longer useful. Our fear of change might

Home-educated students typically score 15 to 30 percentile points above public-school students on standardised academic achievement tests. They live active, social lives and are considered above average when it comes to matters of self-esteem and community engagement. Home-based education is practiced in many countries around the world, for example, the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Russia, Mexico, South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.*
end up being the greatest threat to our future in this fast-changing world and in light of Palestine’s continual struggle with occupation.

I was not suffering from any physical disability, autism, or psychological disorder. I simply hated school immensely, like almost all students today. Going to school every day was a nightmare and nobody explained to me the purpose of this continuous suffering. I was constantly pushed by the system to try to become the top student in my class. I realised that in the process I was losing myself, my purpose, my creativity, and my common sense.

Another brick in the wall

Students have every right to hate school and despise it. Why? Several thinkers believe that schools are simply another form of modern prisons. Let us think about the similarities.

In both the school and the prison, inmates are restricted to one room for long periods of time and have to adhere to a common dress code. They even have to ask for permission to go to the toilet. They are treated like numbers and not as unique persons with various and diverse interests. They are each assigned a numerical value at the end of the year to facilitate comparison with others. They have to walk in lines and conform to certain illogical rules. If one of them breaks the rules then all are subject to collective punishment; negative re-enforcement is imminent and is the common factor. At the end of the day, nobody asks them what they would like to learn or what they would like to do with their lives. They are simply told to shut up, sit still, and trust the system.

This is because the school system was inspired by the eighteenth-century Prussian model of education. It was designed to prepare young children for future factory work. They were taught math and writing to help them with their future jobs. No wonder these subjects still carry more weight than others in today’s system. Schools used to be part of the factory establishment; where do you think the idea of modern-day school bells comes from?

This system, however, has not proven to be effective or valuable today. We are told a number of myths in school: 1) School is the only way to get to college; 2) Going to school and then to college is the only way to secure a job; 3) What we learn in school and college will give us the skills we’ll need later in life; and (d) School is a place for those who seek knowledge.

According to Sir Ken Robinson, every child is born with a deep natural capacity and a tendency to express these capacities through various and unique forms. The current system of mass education tends to suppress and push away students from their natural talents. Children are denied the opportunity to practice what they excel in, which in turn hinders their capacity to engage in the practices and professions they’d truly love in their own lives.**
also not likely to get managerial jobs hunting for fresh graduates. They are qualified for any organisation that is a PhD, is likely to make them over-
is useful mainly for academic careers.

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submit recommendations from former
completed 12 years of school or to
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Universities in many parts of the world
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such as home-schooling are allowed,
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First, with the educational advancement
in many parts of the world, going to
school is no longer a pre-requisite
to enrolling in college, and there is
no need to go very far to prove it. In
Israel (yes, that close) other options
such as home-schooling are allowed,
and this multiple-option system for
education has produced great results.
Universities in many parts of the world
no longer require applicants to have
completed 12 years of school or to
submit recommendations from former
teachers.

Second, our markets are saturated with
university graduates. After finishing
a BA, most graduates realise that
going for higher educational degrees
is useful mainly for academic careers.
Otherwise, having an MA, or worse
a PhD, is likely to make them over-
qualified for any organisation that is
hunting for fresh graduates. They are
also not likely to get managerial jobs
without a number of years of work
experience under their belt. Almost
all jobs advertised now value work
experience much more than university
degrees. Business owners have realised
that school and university settings are
superficial. University graduates are
not prepared for today’s job-market
requirements. Universities and schools
themselves have turned into tuition
businesses rather than knowledge-
seeking institutions. Students are
able to graduate because they have
paid their high tuitions or school fees
although they may still lack the ability
to write a proper report in either Arabic
or English.

Some years back, one of my friends
spent a few good days searching for
his university degree. He looked all
over his house until he finally found
it. My friend was not searching for it
to secure a new job or even to hang it
on a wall somewhere; his soon-to-be
father-in-law wanted to make sure
his daughter would be married to a
university graduate! College degrees are
now mainly used for social status. It’s
true that many businesses still ask for
them, and they sometimes even ask for
high school degrees, but this is again
about the business’s social status and
not a pre-requisite for market entrance.

Third, even basic everyday knowledge
is totally missed or distorted in school.
I have met school graduates who know
nothing about influential Palestinian
personalities, the geography of their
country, or the history of the conflict.
It’s not that they are not interested
in knowing, but the boring school
environment actually discourages
students from acquiring knowledge.
Instead of viewing knowledge as
something that is exciting, it’s treated
simply as mundane information that
students can forget as soon as they
finish their exam. This is definitely not
the student’s fault, or the teacher’s, but
it is a problem with the whole system.

Last but not least, schools are places to
get degrees NOT knowledge. The only
motivation to study is the desire for a
high exam score. Tell students in class
that a particular piece of information, no
matter how vital or important, will not
be on their finals and the students will
lose all motivation and interest. It’s
the only period in their lives when they have
to memorise without understanding,
and when they are not allowed to debate
any idea or come up with their own
solutions. When it comes to educators,
they believe that the solution is always
at the end of the textbook.

I’m not going to talk about school
textbooks or exams or the tawjihi
nightmare because I see them as
part of the total system failure. But
what I think is more important is the
recognition of “failure” itself, especially
when it comes to tawjihi. According
to Sir Ken Robinson, an influential
international adviser on education,
as we grow older we come to realise
the importance of failure in order to
learn from our mistakes, to grow, and
to experience suffering first hand. In
schools, students are told that if they try
to be creative problem-solvers because
they forgot to memorise some silly
number or out-dated rule they will fail.
There is no second chance in exams
and no room for real learning. Even
collaboration is called “cheating”! No
wonder most university graduates
are unable to be team players in
the workplace; they are not used to
developing and expressing ideas in
pairs or in groups.

Walk the walk vs. talk the talk
I don’t claim to know the solution for
this problem, and I think a solution
needs a lot of study, research, and
testing, but I do know that school is
definitely not for everyone. It should
not be mandatory, especially because
it is not the answer! We like to think that
we are teaching our kids something, but
whatever we value today will probably
NOT be of any value 20 years from now,
by the time they have finished college.

Unlike conservative educators who
speak from their high ivory tower, and
before you tell me that leaving school
with the intention of improving your
life is something that can only happen
in the West or in certain cultures, I beg
to differ. I didn’t just talk the talk, I also
walked the walk and was able to enrol
in college without completing 12 years
of schooling. School was definitely not
for me, which is why I left school in the
6th grade and never went back.

It worked out quite well for me, and
whether you like it or not you are
reading an article written by someone
with no high school degree. Are you
ready to discredit all the arguments I’ve
presented simply because I don’t have
a certain piece of paper?

It’s true that I went to college later, but
college was also a social necessity
and not a place for knowledge-seeking
and self-actualisation. Although I
got as far as an MBA, I only worked
in that profession for seven months
before I simply ditched it and entered a
completely different field.
All, and I mean all, the knowledge I acquired and now use in my life was acquired outside the school setting. I have three different jobs, one of them as the editor of the magazine you are holding in your hands. These skills are not easy to learn, and I would not have them if I had stayed sitting on my butt all day in school.

School (in its current form at least) is not for minds that learn by doing things or minds that prefer to experience solutions visually. These days, people who cannot sit still in the classroom are diagnosed with ADHD and forced to deny their own individuality and valuable qualities. Diversity is not ok in a school system at a time when diversity is all that matters for a healthy and balanced society.

A way out of this paradox

Most educational experts are likely to suggest small incremental changes to improve an already broken system. They are not going to admit that the system is obsolete because they have spent a long time in academic halls studying and refining this very system. If they admit that the system is obsolete, then they have wasted their lives chasing a ghost. The experts are not likely to admit it, but seriously concerned parents should figure it out on their own.

Who would want to send their children to such a prison and feel happy about it? It's either parents who do not have enough time to dedicate to their children due to economic or other pressing reasons OR those who – eager for some peace of mind – are happy to send their children away for the day. The second group's motive, in my opinion, is narcissistic. They are not as interested in their children's future or well-being as they would like to believe they are.

I don't have a ready-made solution for this complex problem. What I know is that we can at least be honest about what is happening right under our noses. We can open our eyes wide enough to see schools for what they really are. Knowledge and curiosity are powerful tools that have guided humanity since its very beginning towards advancement and development.

A very interesting project called Hole in Wall, by the Indian researcher Sugata Mitra, is one bright example. The project enables kids to invest a lot of time and effort learning without the aid of any formal educational environment. They are simply responding to their innate curiosity and need for self-development.

Students who would like to reclaim education and make better use of the 12 hopeless years they waste in school classrooms should be allowed to make their own decisions. Parents also should be offered various ways to provide their children with a better education. Unless there is a better system in place and until students are happy to wake up every day to learn something new and something interesting and beneficial on this journey called Life, then I don't think the law should oblige me to send my kids to school … and neither should you!

Ahmad Damen is a Palestinian writer, music composer, and filmmaker. He's the writer of several columns in Al Quds Al Arabi Newspaper (London) and online blogs. In addition to being the content editor of This Week in Palestine, he has directed, researched, and composed music for two internationally successful feature documentaries: The Red Stone (2012) and Forbidden Pilgrimage (2014). He's also a professional oud player and film composer with music credits in more than 12 long documentary and fiction projects.

* http://www.nheri.org/research/research-facts-on-homeschooling.html
Why Do We Pursue University Degrees?

By Riyam Kafri AbuLaban

During my two years at a pharmaceutical company in Ramallah, I was astounded to find that chemistry and biology interns lacked the basic knowledge of their field. A simple dilution calculation required an hour-long revisit to molarity, molality, and dilution. All are basic principles covered in high school chemistry and again during the first year of general chemistry courses that students are required to take as chemistry or biology majors.

In a more recent experience, I had the pleasure of working with a young literature student aspiring to be a writer one day. Working with students, no matter how taxing, is always a pleasure. But here, in addition to pleasure, there was shock and shame at this top student’s serious writing discrepancy. The writing was often fragmented and lacked a serious thesis statement. More often than not, the paragraphs were incoherent and the pieces lacked the cohesiveness of a good essay. That being said, I still loved to work with this student. Her lack of skills, if anything, is a reflection on a poor job done by us, the professors. But where are we doing a poor job? Are we not adequately conveying the basic concepts of chemistry to students? Are we not offering practical writing techniques for literature majors? Or are we inflating our assessments and grades so that the interns we work with are C students posing as A students? In other words, Why are universities producing graduates without the basic knowledge of their respective fields? What have we lost?

Somewhere between industrialisation, modernisation, and technological advancement, the love of knowledge for the sake of knowledge was lost. The reasons that students attend university these days have very little to do with a desire to seek knowledge, to find truth, to find oneself, to find a meaning for life. There has been a shift in status: knowledge is no longer a process but a product. The university is, for the most part, no longer a place where educational development is sought after through a process deemed valuable, honourable, and holy; instead it has become a place in which knowledge is a product, a commodity if you will, picked up (purchased one could say) by those who pass through the system, and more importantly, by those who can afford it. In Palestine, more often than not, this commodity is acquired for free through endless student strikes to waive, postpone, or reduce university fees.

Furthermore, the character of the knowledge that is disseminated today has departed from all that is philosophical and fundamental. Academics are under pressure to convey knowledge that is viewed as practical and more applicable in the work force and the real world. This practical knowledge focuses more on the end results of theories, postulates, and experiments than on the process of how these theories were put forth, or how these experiments were designed and optimised. In teaching the modern atomic view, for example, almost all textbooks summarise a series of experiments that led to our modern view of the atom. Very few mention that these experiments took years to develop and fine tune. A prime example in chemistry is the Millikan oil droplet experiment that led to the calculation of the electronic charge. Students learn the experiment in its final form, with very little emphasis placed on the process that led to the experiment as we know it today, or, for that matter, the controversy surrounding Millikan’s calculations. In other words, what we give to students is the product rather than the process. This is then committed to memory with very little historical or theoretical context. To the student, this is just another small compartment of information that must be remembered and successfully reproduced for an exam. Although the results are clearly communicated, what is muted is the passion it takes to pursue an experiment...
with focus and perseverance. We communicate apparatuses, numbers, and results, but we do not transmit passion and determination. We strip the experiment of what it really is, a process, and abbreviate it into a diagram with the shortest legend possible.

The Millikan experiment is followed by the Rutherford thin gold foil experiment. In my opinion, not sharing with the students the process that Rutherford followed to develop the experiment in its final form dilutes the significance of the experiment and fails to communicate the gravity of its key observation. When asked to write intellectually about the impact of Rutherford’s experiment on the modern view of the atom, what is often put down on paper is a regurgitation of the textbook. Students cannot connect these experiments intellectually to today's view of an atom. Again, like the efforts of Millikan, Rutherford’s hard work, his journey in seeking this knowledge, is lost on students.

Modern society cannot be understood without knowledge. We live in a time that is saturated with all types of information. The university remains the main place where knowledge is created and disseminated. We claim that we communicate operational knowledge rather than fundamental knowledge, which better prepares our graduates to function in the “real world.” But if that is really what we’re doing, then why do our graduates still face challenges when they perform in the workforce? Perhaps we need to revisit our claim that operational knowledge is the best type of knowledge. Maybe we need to return to the basics in order for students to operate from a place of “know and how” rather than know-how.

In our race to cram our students’ brains with information, we have forgotten the scenic route of process. We do not pass on to our students the passion and joy of the actual journey of seeking knowledge, experimenting, and making and correcting mistakes. The satisfaction found in the learning process itself, in solving the mathematical problem rather than finding the correct answer, is not impressed on our students today. In many ways, we are modern day sophists. Sophists, according to Socrates, were not true philosophers but rather shadows of philosophers. They were accused of not teaching truth but rather relying on opinion and popular thought.

In my humble and brief experience in academia, I find students searching for majors that will first and foremost secure them a job, status, and financial stability, rather than majors that they are passionate about and that offer satisfaction in studying. They are always concerned with how long it will take them to complete a degree. Any suggestion that they might take longer than four years is unacceptable and non-negotiable.

One must admit that Palestinians have become increasingly concerned with time and money making. A young man or woman who even thinks of pursuing a PhD runs the risk of being scorned by the entire family. A PhD, after all, takes a long time to complete and isn’t very lucrative. A student once told me that 50 percent of her class have very little respect for PhDs. They do not see the value in the degree and do not understand why people would waste their time pursuing one. PhDs don’t even make good money, she announced. Ironically it is those same students who are trying to cram a double major, a concentration, and a minor all into one bachelor’s degree and complete it in less than four years.

We are so concerned with time. No, I will not pursue a medical degree if it takes me more than six years, I don’t care how much better the quality of education is. Maybe I will get a master’s, but NO way a PhD. I can’t waste time. Time is money, and I need to start making money. These are the notions on which most of our students operate. There are other notions as well. Perhaps the most significant is: I am just getting an education because society tells me I need a degree to hang on a wall somewhere in my house. The concept of university being a place for self-discovery and finding truth is practically non-existent. To revitalise academia as a journey rather than as an end, we need to re-educate ourselves first, and then our students: university is a journey to enlightenment.

It is a place for free thought, experimentation, and an ever-winding road that leads to truth. The main function of teachers is to generate learning in their students based on their own continuous engagement with learning. In other words, we teach our students what we learn. Professors are no different. Our students are products of our own creation, and (let us be honest) we have become jaded. We are bogged down with too many details to marvel at the journey towards truth. Societal pressure to make
money and to be practical, and the view that professors are not practical and have little societal value (yes, this is true, Palestine is suffering from this now) have taken their toll on our professional self-esteem and confidence. Perhaps we are passing on to our students our own prejudice against our lifestyles. Faculty, after all, are human beings involved in the making of other human beings; our emotions, thoughts, fears, achievements, and failures are all communicable attributes that we pass on to the next generation.

The Palestinian context, moreover, has an overbearing effect on education. Universities in Palestine are suffering from severe funding cuts (or rather severe lack of funding, to be more accurate). Academia in particular has been marginalised from one year to the next. Historically, academia and academics have always been a prime target of the Israeli occupation. Examples include the endless closures of universities and schools during the first Intifada, the arrest of faculty members, the attack on students on their way to class, and their arrest and endless detention without a trial.

The Palestinian Authority bears quite a bit of responsibility as well. The educational sector has been shoved to the bottom of the priority list, and decision makers in this sector have shown very little leadership. Innovative projects that dare to push the traditional lines in education take years to become accredited, with very little guidance from authorities.

To add insult to injury, faculty are not paid on time, if at all; students do not pay their university fees; and the academic year is subject to interruptions at any given moment. (I don’t mean to sound so dark, but it is sad, isn’t it?) The Israeli occupying forces’ systematic campus raids hardly leave space for faculty to communicate their own passion about education. (At Al Quds University you spend three out of five days per week trying to avoid suffocation from tear gas.) The discontinuity in the teaching process leaves faculty scrambling for time and worrying about communicating major ideas rather than facilitating detailed discussions in subject matters. The end result is that students more often than not receive mere headlines in their subjects.

Lest this sound too depressing, let me end on this note. There are many sparks of hope to be found in universities. Faculty, individually and collectively, attempt on a daily basis to make the learning process more interesting and rewarding. The majority of us who choose academia as a career are generally dedicated, passionate individuals who believe in teaching as a message and a lifestyle. New programmes with contemporary teaching approaches are popping up in various institutions. The emergence of research-active faculty in a variety of fields — including the basic sciences — in several universities is another example of hope. Palestinians have managed to live on hope for sixty-plus years. Academic institutions have always been a beacon of that hope and development. But for it to be translated into something concrete, we need fundamental change, a revolution, an academic spring on all levels. Universities need to become national priorities with respect to funding, support, hiring, etc., in order for us to revitalise our knowledge-seeking journey and light the way for our students. It is time that universities fulfil the function that they were founded for: to seek truth, knowledge, and freedom.

Riyam is a PhD chemist by training, a writer by passion. She is an assistant professor at Al Quds-Bard College, Al Quds University, Abu Dis, Palestine, and a mother of two. In her free time she makes homemade ice cream and cupcakes with the help of the tiny little hands of Basil and Taima. At the epicentre of her creativity is her husband and partner Ahmed. Riyam can be contacted at rkafri@gmail.com.
Rethinking Palestinian Education

By Khalil Nakhleh

This article is a deliberate attempt to provoke our thinking on Palestinian education by articulating a series of critical questions/reflections about the act of educating and, in particular, educating our past and present generations. I will pose the questions that I have always wanted to raise, but couldn’t or wouldn’t, during my thirty-some years of assisting in the “development” of Palestinian education.

As some have claimed in earlier writings, the act of education is, by its nature, a “subversive” act, if it is done properly; i.e., if it insists on the need to question, to doubt, and to think critically. The act of education should be a liberating act of the mind. This is an uncomfortable and challenging process of mental growth and nurturing. I place this exercise of “rethinking” within this tradition.

Here, at this juncture, I am taking mental stock of our education: not a mechanical, quantitative assessment of what has been achieved (or not achieved); this is being done almost regularly with the beginning of each school year, and in the numerous reports by the Ministry of Education and “funders” alike. But in this exercise, I am delving into deeper strategic thought about what is being inculcated, in terms of vision and cultural and
national values, in the minds of our recurrent generations as they have lived, suffered, and struggled for the last century under foreign occupation, oppression, and dispossession. Can we continue to operate on the assumption that traditional educational approaches are the most effective to transform our state?

A seminal question must be posed at the outset: What is our “vision” of education? **Do we have a vision that is comprehensive, collective, liberation-prone, and people-based**, that empowers and instils confidence and strength in our recurrent generations so that they become empowered to struggle creatively, not only for their livelihood but also for a homeland liberated from oppression and exploitation? I maintain that though we do not have such a vision, we should. Our vision of education should encompass basic elements premised primarily on the conviction that unliberated minds can never liberate occupied homelands; and, in this equation, a “liberated mind” is a prerequisite for “liberated homelands.”

To nurture “liberated minds” is to nurture critically the sum total of our innate abilities that are proud of our traditions and values, and that cannot tolerate oppression of any kind, level, or source. To nurture “liberated minds” means to create thinking minds that insist on resisting any form of oppression imposed at home, at school, at the workplace, or at the national political level. To nurture “liberated minds” is an un-ending collective act of thinking and rethinking, whose actors cannot be limited to the physical space of the school, the university, etc., but encompass by necessity the home and the public space. It is a collective process of inculcation in which instructors, students, parents, intellectuals, moral advocates, ethicists, etc., get involved in the same loop. This process will certainly not succeed without instilling and rewarding the ability to think independently. Deep down, I must admit, this is an act of affirming mental rebellion!

This discussion leads us to pose another related question: Should we promote a “degree-driven” education? It is not a terribly new thing to claim that our educational system, following the prevalent trend in the Western world, is a degree-driven system; but what is new should be the realisation that this is not how education was classified historically, and that a separation always existed between the knowledge, competencies, skills, values, etc., that one learned, or was exposed to, and the end result of the process – the terminal phase – or the degree (piece of cardboard) one holds. Today we identify (and define) individuals in terms of the end degree of each phase of schooling: we speak of *tawjihi* graduates, or *baccalorius*, or *magistair*, or *doctor* – often and frequently, without giving any hint about the content of what that individual learned, or what type of knowledge he/she acquired, or what new human characteristics were added to his/her personality, etc. In other words, we do not show any concern about whether this graduate has become an independent analytical thinker, rational and, dare I say, a better human being, more compassionate, more caring, more just, more honest, etc. Otherwise, how can one explain that after spending three to four years at a university, the bulk of our graduates cannot recall what they learned, or why, or in what context, etc. They only remember that they fulfilled all the requirements in order to graduate with a particular degree, which then becomes their gateway to a *wathifeh* (a job). This is the only way to explain the system’s (i.e., the parents’ and administrators’) insistence on clinging to the *tawjihi* despite the well-founded criticisms of its educational shortcomings. Such a system has succeeded in instilling in its “learners,” with the encouragement and reward of the parents and the society, that *tawjihi* is an obligatory gateway that leads from the end of the first phase to the beginning of another “degree-oriented” phase.

The expectations generated by a degree, whether *baccalorius* (BA) or *magistair* (MA), are disproportionate and, consequently, harmful to the work needs of this society, and result in inflated and twisted demands for societal rewards. Statements such as, “Because of my degree I should be a ‘director,’” are often reiterated. I have frequently encountered this attitude. Because of the degree, there is an attitude of arrogance in refusing...
to perform certain jobs, or tasks, on the assumption that they are beneath that level of "study." On this basis, I maintain that the bulk of BA- and MA-degree holders, which our universities and colleges churn out annually, are dangerous to our societal development. In a way, they contribute to what has now become known as the process of "dumbing" our population.

To comprehend this engulfing process, we need to reflect on what is emerging as the "commoditisation" of our education.

Since the onslaught of neoliberal capitalism, we abided by, and identified with, the Western approach of reducing education to a commodity, something that can be purchased (priced) or sold. This, of course, raises questions about "cost," on the one hand, and "resources," on the other. What aspect of education is being "priced," and according to whose resource level, and why? What are we paying for? A certain degree level? Skill? Training? Knowledge? Competence? A creative, liberated mind? An effective agent of control? A down payment for a profitable investment project four or six years hence?

To reflect on the above questions, one has to be candid and honest, and acknowledge that most of our people, particularly the poor and the marginalised, are viewed and treated by our political and economic oppressors as "surplus humanity"! Meaning that they are undeserving of basic human life and can be targeted for elimination, physically or psychologically. Thus, our poor do not figure in this neoliberal capitalist equation. Why should we tolerate it? We should not, and we should gear our education to reverse it. Those who abide by the "commoditisation" approach end up buying, or stealing, or acquiring degrees, often through the tutelage of foreign governments, or through their transnational "aid" organisations, to become agents from within the society for legitimising the entire neoliberal approach of our educational system, through the lucrative positions with which they are rewarded.

People-based education should not be commoditised; it is a collective human act that entices and draws young minds to use the knowledge they acquire – creatively, independently, humanely, and justly – on the path toward liberated minds.

Dr. Khalil Nakhleh is a Palestinian independent researcher and writer. Since 1984, he has been engaged in the development of Palestinian education. Until his voluntary retirement in 2010, he was a technical consultant with the Ministry of Higher Education for a World Bank project on strategic development and self-assessment of Palestinian higher education institutions. His latest book is Professor Israel Shahak: An Unwavering Humanist Critic of Jewish-Zionist-Israeli Hypocrisy (2014).
Palestinian Cultural/Historical Geography
A Curricular Requirement

By Ali Qleibo

One of the characteristics of a state is the cultural identity of its citizens.

Identity in post-structuralism is a narrative. According to Paul Ricoeur, identity is the story I tell myself or the story I tell others about myself. Responses to the questions “Who am I?” and “Where do I come from?” as well as a corollary reconstruction of the events that lead to the present underline narrative identity.

In the course of their education, Palestinian students are expected to become acquainted with – to master, as far as they are able – certain bodies of knowledge that relate to Palestinian cultural/historical geography, apart from acquiring the basic skills: writing clearly, speaking articulately, and reading attentively. The Palestinian educational system has been deficient on all levels. In general, the school system produces apathetic, aggressive, barely literate, sullen graduates. Mediocrity prevails. Lax at times, authoritarian and patronising at others, the Palestinian Authority has failed to produce viable, well-adjusted, independent, and learned tawjihi graduates.

“Should twenty students fail, then eighteen would be chosen to pass and two would be chosen to repeat the class.” In a context where the majority of students expect to pass without attending classes and with minimum effort, Abu Fuad, the Arabic schoolteacher from Bet Ula, explained the sense of betrayal felt by the students who fail my class. My stern attitude as a university teacher scares students away. “Within the Palestinian educational system all students are automatically promoted to the next level.”

Lack of motivation, truancy, and indolence – symptoms of fundamental alienation produced by the curriculum of the Ministry of Education – are the common malaise of my students. By the time they have finished their schooling, by the age of eighteen, freshmen come to my classroom totally disoriented, bamboozled, frustrated, and in an almost chronic state of confused agitation. Functional illiterates, many can barely decipher the words in a sentence. The analytic move from the individual unit of meaning to synthetic overall understanding of the paragraph presents a challenge. Metaphoric and literal levels of understanding form a major handicap. Our students have been conditioned to rote learning. But they have not been trained to reflect on the meaning of the written...
The literary discourse stands in one world; they exist in another. Bridging the hiatus between the words of the text and their own individual lives, i.e., helping my students situate themselves in the text, is a formidable challenge. Ill-educated, unable to concentrate, and restless, they lack passion for knowledge. They dream of breaking away from the homeland. Anywhere but here. Against this critical turbulence that underlies the new wave of immigration abroad, another aspect of the silent transfer, the educational system has yet to launch a cultural/historical/geographic multidisciplinary course to counter the current state of alienation and promote a sense of commitment and belonging. Omission is commission: our educational system produces students who are strangers in their homeland.

“I must get political asylum in Sweden,” confided Basem, a 20-year-old student from Bani-Naim. “I must get away from here.”

I have written elsewhere about the Muslim sanctuary of Yaqin, the sacred rock that marks the parting of ways between Abraham and Lot. The same site later came to be associated also with Abraham’s firm belief (yaqin) in God’s power as he witnessed the cataclysm that shook Sodom and Gomorrah. Though Basem knew of the holy shrine on the outskirts of his village, he was ignorant of the significance of the sanctuary of Yaqin and had no desire to know its narrative.

“In Sweden they provide housing and a monthly allowance.” He yearned to leave Bani-Naim. Although his brother is qualified as a surgical anaesthetist, it has been economically more viable for him to peddle various goods in Israel. His father also had a work permit in Israel and made a living through his work as an itinerant salesman.

My Bedouin friend Khalil, who often accompanies me on my field trips, later explained that seeking political asylum in Sweden has become a general trend among young Palestinians.

“This is in conformity with the common maxim: Minimum effort and minimum income, للقلة والراحة.”

The bonds that tie Palestinians to their homeland have sustained a traumatic blow by the Israeli systemic undermining of the Palestinian agricultural system and the transformation of the occupied people from peasants to blue-collar workers. The primordial mythos of the land inextricably bound to the traditional economic relationship of the Palestinian peasants to their ancestral land — as reflected in the agricultural cycle, the settlement pattern, the cave cities, the perception and use of space, the shrines and sanctuaries — has been dramatically ruptured. The West Bank has become a blue-collar ethnic dorm. As Palestinians are alienated from the land, exasperated by poor income, and exploited in Israeli settlement jobs or by avaricious Palestinian capitalists (with no union rights and ridiculous low wages), the dream of migrating to Canada or seeking political asylum in Sweden has become rampant.

I soon realised that Basem does not know anything outside Bani-Naim. As is the case with the majority of my students, Basem’s concept of the historical/cultural geography of Palestine is blank. Though he commutes daily to the university in Hebron, he neither knows the names of the numerous villages he passes along the way, nor does he care about them; they fade into the background of his consciousness as white noise. On his way to college he rides perfunctorily past the mountaintops dotted with sacred sanctuaries: the hallowed tree of al-Sa’ir and the cave cities of the Edomites. The contributions of the various civilisations that have succeeded each other in Palestine — Hurrite, Canaanite, Hebrew, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Mamluk, and Ottoman — are an enigma. The land holds no mythos. There is no discourse that mediates and familiarises him with the shifting landscape. Basem is counted among the majority of Palestinians who are disoriented strangers in their own homeland!

No longer peasants, they are now children of poor blue-collar workers. The villages, no longer the bastions of tradition, have become ethnic blue-collar dorms. The puerile selection of dabkeh, tabbuleh, ma’lubeh, and...
“Where in Europe?” he asked.
My friend Marc Pace, the representative of Malta, had told me that there are a few scholarships available for Palestinians.
“You are making fun of me! Malta is not in Europe it is here.”
I must have looked very puzzled. I did not know that we have a village called Malta; I inquired where it is….
“I do not know where it is,” he replied. “But whenever I ask my grandmother where she’s going, she says, ‘To Malta.’” “Malta is here!” he reiterated. “My grandmother goes there all the time.”

He must have seen my disappointment.
To launch “Palestinian Historical/Cultural Geography” as a school curricular requirement is a form of teaching sumud, of remaining steadfast in the motherland. The narrative of Palestine – its peoples, its history, and its cultural geography – is integral to the struggle to ward off the confiscation of Palestinian land by Israeli settlers and the obfuscation of Palestinian heritage and cultural patrimony in the Zionist revisionist narrative. With knowledge comes intimacy and love of the land. Within this traumatic context – increasing settlements and house demolitions, the eviction of families from their homes as a preliminary step for a takeover by Israeli fanatics, the Israeli abuse of natural resources to the disadvantage of the Palestinians, the transformation of the topography of the land to become testimony to Israeli nationalist narratives, and the appropriation of our Canaanite, Biblical, and Muslim cultural patrimony – systematising the Palestinian narrative within a coherent curriculum has assumed seminal importance. The knowledge of Palestinian cultural geography becomes a pedagogical means through which young Palestinians may develop their fundamental relation to the land and to its history. They should be taught that they are the legitimate heirs to all the civilisations that have succeeded one other on the land of Palestine. The discursive narrative of Palestinian cultural identity encompasses the diverse dynamic cultural adaptations of our ancestors to an ecological system in flux. But no one can be naively romantic and presume to teach that the present Palestinian is a modern-day Canaanite.

Identity as a social construct is one of the key aspects of historical/cultural geography, which enables individuals to experience Palestinian identity in a narrative that seeks to appropriate the history and geography of Palestine. Complemented with curricular field trips it enables the students to experience “Palestinian-ness” at iconic heritage sites. These selected sites symbolise fundamental aspects of “Palestinian-ness” and in so doing present Palestine as a family, a group of relations with shared history, values, and beliefs, as well as common characteristics.

The proposed Palestinian curricular narrative is a testimony to the silent contribution of the ancient Canaanite tribes in their various city-states, now clusters of Palestinian villages. The suggested curriculum provides young Palestinians with the narratives about ancient Semitic religious rites and symbols that are superimposed onto the Biblical iconographic figures such as the Virgin Mary, Jonah, Noah, and Lot. The tradition of St. George/al-Khader fits into this “religious rite” as well. The cultural discourse provides extremely relevant information about the constituent elements of traditional Palestinian identity, namely the agricultural calendar, traditional sports, the role of women, and economic solidarity of the extended family, as well as the concepts of nature, sexual intimacy, and privacy. Special emphasis must be placed on the great role played by the Crimean War and the nineteenth-century Ottoman reforms in providing the underpinnings of the modernist Palestinian identity. As a result the Palestinian narrative unfolds a tapestry of life that has witnessed continued adaptations of the various peoples who have lived in Palestine.

“Historical/Cultural Geography of Palestine” is the ideological framing of history and identity. It addresses the relationship between time and space in the development of heritage in Palestine’s local historical geography, which is an approach that reifies local events and narratives into national processes. The proposed curriculum implies the framing of history and its relationship with narratives constitutive of national identity. By situating the narrative in the local spatial context in the individual cluster of villages and connecting it to wider regional cultural geography, the heritage landmarks become signifiers that help advance the understanding of the highly diversified cultural expressions of Palestinian national identity.

Dr. Ali Qleibo is an anthropologist, author, and artist. A specialist in the social history of Jerusalem and Palestinian peasant culture, he is the author of Before the Mountains Disappear, Jerusalem in the Heart, and Surviving the Wall, an ethnographic chronicle of contemporary Palestinians and their roots in ancient Semitic civilisations. Dr. Qleibo lectures at Al-Quds University. He can be reached at aqleibo@yahoo.com.

Article photos by Ali Qleibo.
Reclaiming Diversity in Education

What happened to the underground schools and universities of the first Intifada?

By Alessandro Petti

In 1987, in an attempt to suppress the first Intifada (the Palestinian civil protests against the military occupation), the Israeli government banned people from gathering together and closed all schools and universities. As a consequence, Palestinian civil society grew through the organisation of an underground network of schools and universities in private houses, garages, and shops. Universities were no longer confined within walls or university campuses, and teachers and students began to use different learning environments in cities and villages. These gatherings and assemblies reinforced the social and cultural life among Palestinian communities.

Learning was not limited to the hours spent sitting in classrooms; mathematics, science, literature, and geography were subjects that could be imparted among friends, family members, and neighbours.

In order to resist the long periods of curfews imposed by the Israeli army, these self-organised spaces for learning also included self-sufficiency activities, such as growing fruits and vegetables and raising animals. Theoretical knowledge was combined with knowledge that emerges from action and experimentation. Learning became a crucial tool for gaining freedom and autonomy. People discovered that they could share knowledge and be in charge of what and how to study.

The classical structure, in which “expert teachers” transmit knowledge and students are mere recipients to be filled with information, was substituted by a blurred distinction between the two. A group dynamic opened this new learning environment to issues of social justice, inequality, and democracy. The first Intifada was, in fact, a non-violent movement that aimed not only to change the system of colonial occupation but also to create new spaces for social change. For example, youth and women now had the opportunity to challenge traditional and patriarchal sectors of Palestinian society. Within these processes, education was perceived as an essential tool for liberation and emancipation. The knowledge produced within the group structure was no longer distant and alienating, but rather grounded in the present political struggle for justice and equality.

At the beginning of the nineties, this open and community-based system of education continued to flourish.

Universities were no longer confined within walls or university campuses, and teachers and students began to use different learning environments in cities and villages. These gatherings and assemblies reinforced the social and cultural life among Palestinian communities.

Top photo: During the first Intifada, people from Beit Sahour, like all other Palestinian communities, came together to resist Israeli occupation.
Bottom photo: Attempting to replant an olive tree uprooted by Israeli bulldozers.
of learning was not considered by the newly established Palestinian Authority. The national Palestinian educational curriculum continued to be based on the Jordanian national system, ignoring these challenging and rich experiences.

However, most of the leaders of this underground network became key figures in the Palestinian non-governmental sector. Many considered that the state-building process of the last years had become centralised, bureaucratised and, in some cases, authoritarian. The non-governmental sector is the space where these experimental practices in health, environment, human rights, and education have continued to develop.

Most NGOs in Palestine today, much like the PA, are internationally funded. Although donors operate in support of the local population, they are in fact not accountable to the people, often pursuing the cultural and political agendas of the donor states. Philanthropy has thus become one of the main vehicles for Western intervention in the politics and culture of Palestine.

Bearing these dangers in mind, the network of NGOs still seems to be an important tool for developing various policies. In particular, non-governmental spaces are able to react more efficiently to the needs of marginalised sectors of society that are not represented by state policies. A new type of common space – not yet adequately understood and theorised – has thus emerged through NGO culture.

One very interesting example of this kind of communal educational space is the international school of Le Petit Prince in Bethlehem. The school was established by a group of parents and teachers who were concerned about the education of children in Palestine. They imagined a school in which each student is a source of knowledge and an active learner, not just a recipient of information. They imagined an educational approach in which teachers are not instructors but co-learners, where students and teachers engage in projects together that privilege play, critical reflection, and creative-arts practices.

The school is based on a number of principles. The students have three specific pedagogical pillars: the family, the teachers, and the space of the school that was conceived for inspiring creativity and independence in learning. In this environment, students, teachers, and parents together play an active role in the life of the school. The parents’ participation in active committees is a fundamental contribution in shaping the school.

In addition, the activities of the school do not invade the relations and activities that students have with members of their families. No compulsory homework is given to children in the early years. However, fundamental books and complementary activities are recommended for students and families.

A limited number of students per class makes the learning environment interactive and familiar. Students are invited to learn from each other, and working in groups is considered fundamental. Knowledge is not separated from action; students learn by experimenting, and play is considered an instrument for learning. The curriculum is adapted to the children’s potential by the pedagogical team and is based on fundamental books that teachers and students read and discuss together.

Instead of a standardised system to categorise the level of every student, teachers produce a detailed evaluation twice a year that includes each student’s progress to be discussed with parents.

The cultural and social environment of the school is diverse, all faiths are respected, and gender-power relations acknowledged and challenged.

Despite the enthusiasm of teachers, parents, and, more importantly, students of the school, a fundamental question remains: How can a dialectical relation be created between this non-governmental, experimental, and dynamic, yet fragile and transitory method of education and the more stable and formal, but also more static and closed system. Or rather, how can a relationship between these two different but complementary systems be created in order to ensure that the experience of Le Petit Prince not become simply an interesting but isolated experiment? These experiences are an invitation to reactivate critical and communal learning environments in order to influence educational institutions and to contribute to the way universities and schools understand themselves, aiming to overcome conventional structures – learning environments that are not confined within the traditional walls of academia, but which cut across different forms of knowledge to integrate aspects of life and dialogue with the larger community. The aim of these experiments is essentially to reclaim plurality in education and diversity in ways of learning.

In addition to being an architect and a researcher in urbanism, Alessandro Petti is interested in critical pedagogy and is a co-founding member of Campus in Camps, an experimental educational programme in Dheisheh Refugee Camp in Bethlehem.
As Palestine launches itself into the world economy, the Executive Club provides an area where domestic and international business people can meet, share ideas, and innovate new tiers of cooperation – away from the hassle of downtown.

The Executive Club hopes to become the home-away-from-home for the Palestinian business community.

Despite the hardships of doing business in Palestine, the private sector has been able to develop the Palestinian economy and push it into the international realm.

The Executive Club has thus emerged organically, supporting Palestine’s business sector as it continues to leverage its local and international influence.

For the Palestinian economy to survive, private-sector leaders and thought leaders must always be able to take time away from the daily grind to enjoy a soothing environment that is conducive to networking, innovating, and dreaming about tomorrow.

This environment is now available and finding its niche in today’s multi-faceted Ramallah.

The Mist Lounge, open from 5:00 p.m. – 1:00 a.m., with traditional oud music as well as jazz, boasts a beautiful, relaxing ambiance, with LED lights that simulate starlight on the ceiling.

In addition, the Mist Lounge is open to the public for private gatherings. Members and non-members are able to enjoy the Hareer Restaurant, a top-quality, modern restaurant that serves traditional Mediterranean food with an Armenian touch.

The restaurant features a modern, Oriental décor, with mini potted olive trees and old cultural artefacts.

Of all the services the Executive Club provides, perhaps the most luxurious are those of the Health Club.

For members (and the public, by appointment), who are looking to relax, the Health Club boasts a gym with state-of-the-art technology, a personal trainer, and a juice bar with healthy drinks. For members (and the public, by appointment), who are looking to relax, the Health Club offers a treatment spa with Sothys beauty products, a choice between an individual room or a couples room, an expert from Australia, and manicure/pedicure options. Members receive a discount on spa treatment services. At the club all details matter. Privacy is of utmost importance to the management, and there are separate male/female entrances with separate intimate treatment settings to ensure the comfort of the members. In addition, the Health Club provides Jacuzzis, private saunas and steam rooms, and a heated swimming pool with swimming lessons for members and their families. The Club’s ultimate priority is the well-being and privacy of its members.

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Will Our Students Leave Us One Day?

By Diana Al-Salqan

The answers oftentimes lie in the basics. Curiosity and thirst for knowledge are intrinsic to human beings; and diversity is another rule of nature. Differences in needs, interests, and abilities are obvious in a single classroom, whether for sixty students or fifteen, so what about the differences that are present among various groups of students, various learning environments, or even various generations? If education succeeds, it is because an act of learning or “progress” – not memorisation – has taken place. Success in a learning environment means that such basics are respected and later nurtured in a way that leads to meaningful and useful results; and I stress here meaningful and useful for both the student and society. This is true whether the learning process takes place using a smart board in a fancy building or under a tree using cardboard boxes. Such basic issues in education do not require donor countries or huge budgets. If they are absent from the discourse of those who lay the foundations or policies, it is an indication of a deeper problem.

Providing knowledge or the thinking fuel that can be used to solve problems – whether personal or societal – can be encouraged through enhancing research skills and projects. Research is one piece in the puzzle to accommodate individual differences that exist in students’ abilities, interests, and needs in learning. The teacher or the person immediately involved in the learning process is another piece. The teacher has a central role to play in ensuring the quality of education and must therefore have a say or a choice in the process. Unfortunately, the university system in Palestine is drifting further and further away from issues that matter in educating generations. For example, in our tertiary education system, issues such as rote learning, inflated classrooms, standardised exams and textbooks, misuse or over-use of testing, inappropriate or badly designed assessment criteria, and, sadly, sometimes poor physical conditions still plague the system. The industrial and Western societies from which we adopted this system have reconstructed and reformed their educational institutions in many ways and, most importantly, in ways that guarantee perpetual renewal of ideas and thus change.

Offering an online component within academic programmes is a major change that Western universities are adopting, and one that I will focus on as an example. Both students and administrators in Western societies have wholeheartedly embraced such a revolutionary tool in education. A countless number of online courses exist these days and offer information on numerous issues that range from politics to literature, language learning, career advice, mathematics, and even the science of genetics. Students can listen to lectures by such prominent personalities as Salman Khan, Glenn Wilson, Muhammad Yunus, Noam Chomsky, and many other world-renowned professors, politicians, and scientists from institutions such as Harvard University, London School of Economics, and Stanford Graduate School of Business. The cyber world is open not just to well-established institutions but also to new learning ideas, lectures, and institutions from around the world, such as the free Khan Academy.

Some online courses in the West are used to underline good practices in education and respond to the basics of good teaching, such as accommodating student differences and various learning strategies through offering remedial optional tutorials for weaker students or more advanced optional work for the hard-working student. Such courses can respond to the visual factor that some students need in order to enhance learning, for example. Offering specialised courses is yet another advantage; and flexibility is a huge plus that can cross geographical
boundaries and – if quality is ensured – make extra revenues available to the educational institution.

In order to address the scepticism that surrounds online teaching – regarding the lack of face-to-face or personal teaching and quality – certain answers are still needed. Online courses require hard work, flexibility, and innovation, elements that are counter to the traditional options we stress in our education system and mentality. Good online courses are different from the ones provided by our universities that are mainly workbook- or lecture-oriented. These courses at local universities come to reinforce the same mentality of rote learning and traditional practices in teaching. They retrace the same lines and hence are not flourishing.

Online courses offer great opportunities even for the progressive liberal education systems in the West. If modern Western education systems are already becoming more adaptive to changing social trends and needs, what effect could such a tool have on an educational system that is stagnant in its approach and ideology, deteriorating in its statistics, and crippled in its ability to transform and develop?

Adapting or improving the education system is not just an educational or a political choice; it is a human attitude towards younger generations. Imagine the following scenario: a young boy is explaining to his father what he (the son) knows about the “proper and new ways of raising a child.” The father, dumbfounded, has a few options to deal with the situation. One, he could completely discredit the son by ridiculing and/or even refuting his approach. Two, the father could ignore it totally and consider it an amusing comment. Or, as a last option, the father’s response could reflect a whole new situation. The father could check the son’s source of information, using his new situation to digest his son’s changing character, interests, and mind-set. The father could stop at this phase of understanding or he could take it a step further and react by either speaking to his son or making certain changes.

The first two, in my opinion, are reckless attitudes that result from lack of respect or from ignorance and/or selfishness. The third attitude is more difficult and time consuming, yet it is based on a humbler position – towards knowledge and younger generations – and, more importantly, it is based on an attitude of caring. Although the first two choices may seem more natural responses than the third, there is a world of difference between them.

A situation at the university has triggered similar reflections on my part. In one of my classes, where the students present their own work on a controversial topic of their choice and interest, a junior student stood in front of the whole class to present his ideas about education. He is registered in a series of Harvard University lectures about teaching math. The student compared his new knowledge of “how teaching math should take place” with the way he was being taught math. His conclusion revealed his disappointment in the lack of new math-teaching methods at the university.

Another example is a junior student who joined an English-language course for beginners. Later in his third year, when he joined a more advanced and specialised English course, I noticed that his language skills had improved much more than those of his fellow students. I praised his progress and asked him what he attributed it to. He said that he had taken advantage of all the possibilities that exist on the Internet. He followed online grammar lessons, listened to audio versions of articles to improve his pronunciation, engaged in online conversation sessions, and even improved his spelling and sentence structure, all through resources that are available to all but that are used only by the few who are savvy enough to find them or who are willing to use them.

These examples could provoke the first two attitudes that I referred to: indifference and irreverence, or they could be seen as wake-up calls from our younger generations who are constantly being met with indifference to their educational problems and needs. Why would students go to a boring, useless (in their opinion) lecture when they could at any time listen to a world-renowned lecturer who excites them and challenges their brains with new information? Why would students be content with white and black workbooks to improve their foreign-language skills while there is a world of excellence out there at their disposition? Students can do it on their own. There are online videos that present real-life situations with real people who are native speakers of the language. They can benefit from online sessions with real people, all built around specific grammar or vocabulary tasks designed by specialised linguists.

With the development of biometric identification, some of these well-established universities could offer some of their certified, quality online courses to students anywhere in the world. They could offer not just new and interesting information, but also information that could be used in the workplace as well. Our students already know about the ailments that plague the education system because there is an enormous world of knowledge around them ready to be accessed and grabbed.

Time is the best filter for the future. In my view, however, failure to enhance good practices in education – such as self-learning, free thinking, teacher reverence, and other practices that reinforce basic needs in learning – is a failure to adopt a caring human attitude towards our younger generations. It is better for our society to adapt to changes that motivate progress rather than to wake up one day unexpectedly and unprepared in its arms.

Diana Al-Salqan is an author and educator who taught English language, reading, and writing for more than ten years at Birzeit University. She holds an M Phil degree in European literature from Cambridge University, in the United Kingdom, and a BA degree in English language and literature from Birzeit University. She has always tried – wherever possible – to use local and youth-related issues in her English teaching materials and has found positive results. She has authored and compiled teaching material for advanced English language courses at Birzeit University.
An Educator’s Reflections

By Ramzi Rihan

our children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life’s longing for itself.

If he [the teacher] is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind.

Say not, “I have found the truth,” but rather, “I have found a truth.”

Gibran Khalil Gibran, The Prophet (1923)

Much has been written, and is still being written, about education, but these three quotes from Gibran succinctly summarise all that needs to be said about it. His style sounds unfamiliar to us; it is the language of deep concern and firm conviction rather than the pseudo-scientific jargon that is widespread these days.

We can claim that our children are indeed ours; and this is true. But every child is a new life who shares many features with all humanity and indeed all life. But every child is also a unique being with his/her own personality, urges, and thoughts. It has become commonplace to assert this obvious truth, but it is rarely reflected in our dealings with children. Children are frequently treated as objects that should embody our own expectations rather than as they are in reality, namely, centres of consciousness and volition.

From early infancy through adulthood, we need to understand and accept the differentness and independence of the “other.” This attitude has to start at home, be propagated through school, and endure in our relations with other adults and peers. This attitude is of paramount importance in the teaching process and has become more crucial than ever with the emergence of “youth culture.” Young adults have become a recognised social group that has its own norms and aspirations. One may claim that a “children’s culture” has also recently emerged. Many influences now affect young people outside the scope of family and school. These include social media, peers, and ideological groups that try to recruit – or brainwash – young people. Home and school have to adapt to this rapidly changing reality. Children have to be guided and convinced, not simply ordered around. The first thing that they have to be convinced of is that they must be willing partners in the learning/teaching process; but this requires that teachers welcome them as active partners. This approach is still lacking in many of our teachers. Inculcating this attitude is the highest priority of the educational system.

This brings us to the second quotation from Gibran. Teachers who simply transmit their knowledge to their students are indulging in sterile reproduction – with the obvious contradiction of this oxymoron. For education to be life-giving, it has to draw out the learner and help him/her to grow. Indeed, the word education is from the Latin, meaning to draw out or bring up. It is not surprising that the same applies to the Arabic word tarbiyah, which is the noun derived from the verb raba, which means to grow. Hence true education brings out the potential of the learner and excites enthusiasm. Of course, teachers are expected to know more than learners. But teachers have to see beyond their knowledge and delve into the minds and hearts of the learners to motivate, guide, and support them in the search for their path to knowledge, understanding, and appreciation. This requires that teachers have a selfless attitude, which is hard to acquire and difficult to maintain. This lack of selflessness is the biggest hurdle to good teaching. Teacher training programmes usually concentrate on a sufficient degree of knowledge of the discipline and routine pedagogical methods; they do not have the courage to penetrate and mould the depths of the aspiring teacher as a human being.

The third quotation from Gibran is an eternal truth that has acquired additional...
urgency in recent times. Knowledge of the material world – both physical and biological – was dogmatic in ancient times. But expanding evidence has forced science to accept ever-evolving theories and explanations. The social sciences and humanities have followed similar trends. However, many people in their daily lives still adhere to dogmatic views of reality that preclude true understanding and proper action in the face of many challenges. Education has to overturn this rigidity and guide learners to accept fluidity and multiplicity without abandoning fundamental principles, and at the same time appreciate the difference between what is fundamental and what is derived. This is all the more necessary in an interconnected world in which many cultures meet.

The above considerations have been stated in general and abstract terms, but they apply with added force to the Palestinian situation. Palestine shoulders many burdens: a legacy from the past with partial relevance and many outmoded practices and traditions, a cultural onslaught from the outside world with some useful influences (and many useless or even harmful ones), and a vicious attack on its very survival. Conflicting ideologies wage battle against each other in a society that is searching for its true identity. Everyday concerns have become paramount in an ongoing situation of political turmoil and economic uncertainty.

Among society’s many urgent concerns, education has been relegated to a low position on the list of priorities, with quantitative expansion as the only aim of the leadership. National expenditure on education is low. Education is a long-term investment that yields its fruits decades later. This needs an educational leadership that aspires to the future while working in the present. A recurrent criticism of the Palestinian education system is the emphasis on exams that measure memorisation of disconnected facts acquired through rote learning. Technological innovations have, as an unintended consequence, reduced the appreciation of the value of good teaching. Curricula are out-dated and need thorough renovation. Hence Palestinian education has abandoned its primary role as an instrument for national development. It has instead turned into a national burden with low returns.

A radical shift in the Palestinian educational system has to become a top social priority. Enrolment at all levels of education has reached acceptable rates, although a balanced increase in these rates is always desirable. Attention should now be directed towards the nature of the educational process itself. Pedagogy has to be re-defined as a human interaction. Curricula must include the development of critical thinking and analytic skills. The acquisition of information is only the first step in education and not its ultimate aim. More importantly, education should seek to arouse the joy of learning and turn it from a stultifying obligation into an invigorating activity. Such changes are the necessary requirements for Palestinian education to contribute to social advancement, cultural enrichment, economic growth, and political success.

Is the educational leadership willing to transform Palestinian education from an illusory shadow into a living process? Does it have the vision to guide this transformation? Or do we need new leadership with sincere dedication, unflinching determination, and deep understanding in order to achieve this aim? The future of Palestine hangs in the balance.

Ramzi Rihan is a Palestinian educator who has worked at Birzeit University since 1970. He has held a number of administrative posts during his career. He has also participated in many conferences on Palestinian education.
Upbringing and Education

By Samia Khoury

The ministry in charge of education is called Tarbiyeh wa Ta’aleem in Arabic, which literally means “upbringing and education.” So education not only means finishing a syllabus, which includes languages, sciences, and social studies, but also building character and instilling in children the moral values that make good citizens who care for the common good. Unfortunately, tarbiyeh is practically non-existent in most schools. Although there are some schools that have very strict rules in order to guarantee discipline and a well-behaved class, this does not mean at all that moral values are built into the system. The students end up behaving well for fear of the administration or the system of punishment, but that does not create a permanent transformation.

We have a tendency to blame all the bad things that affect our community’s behaviour on the occupation. There is a lot of truth in that, especially because we are all in a permanent state of frustration – when we are forced to wait for hours at checkpoints to be able to get to work and earn a living, or when our homes are demolished, or when the breadwinner does not come home at the end of the day because he was picked up by the army and thrown in jail. Yet there is still a lot that we can do to improve our lives. One example concerns the unethical behaviour of drivers, especially at Qalandiya Checkpoint. Instead of staying in line to ensure a smooth crossing for everyone, each driver thinks of outsmarting the other, irrespective of the confusion this creates and how it affects public welfare. In fact, every driver feels that he or she is the only one who is in a hurry and that everybody else is on a leisure tour. Actually, we are subconsciously angry at the occupation but we take it out on each other.

Respect for the rights of others starts from kindergarten, and teachers and parents have a great responsibility to instil moral values in the children in order to create a generation of good citizens who care for the common good. Parents and teachers are supposed to be role models. If the children watch their parents throw tissue paper from the car window, they are bound to do the same with their own trash. And if they hear their parents cursing at the checkpoint and picking a fight with the car that just passed them, then those children will surely see nothing wrong with picking a fight with their own classmates. It is not surprising that the violence of the occupation has found its way into schools and homes. For this reason it is very important that the schools have programmes that allow children to vent their anger and to help them use their energies in positive ways. Very often I pass by a school at the end of a school day, and it is unbelievable how rough the children are with each other. In fact, the teachers are often unable to control the children. We must realise that there is something very wrong and that we risk losing a whole generation. So what can
we do? How can we put an end to this phenomenon? What kind of an education system do we need in order to bring up a generation that is caring and committed to moral values?

A remarkable spirit prevailed during the first Intifada as everybody struggled willingly for the same cause with discipline and cooperation. But at the same time, while the authority of the military was eroded, so was every other kind of authority, whether at home or at school. The young people took upon themselves a big responsibility and lost much of their childhood; a childhood that could not be retrieved as they became, overnight, responsible young men and women. The spirit of rebellion against all authority was a natural reaction. I remember once asking a young boy to pick up a bottle that he had thrown onto the street. He replied, “Let the municipality pick it up.” This is when I realised that neither home nor school alone can repair the damage that has been done. Gone are the days when a young boy would heed my request. It now takes more than a request. We need to build on the spirit of cooperation and discipline that we all experienced during the Intifada in order to heal the brokenness of our society; a society that is still not liberated from occupation. We need a built-in system in our schools that stresses moral values and teaches ethics as one of the compulsory subjects.

Unfortunately many of the teachers themselves have been born and brought up under this brutal military occupation, while their own parents were struggling to make a living. So it is not surprising to see a lot of frustration reflected throughout the community. Anger and frustration do not help the process of healing or of bringing up a healthy generation. Frustration is very contagious. Thus we need teachers who consider teaching to be a vocation and who radiate joy and hope in order to provide children with a wholesome education that includes good citizenship practices and an appreciation of the common good.

Given that many of the contributors to this issue will write about the educational syllabus and the standardised exam that encourages memorisation instead of innovative and critical thinking, I will not touch on this subject. But I want to appeal to those who have anything to do with the school curriculum to include at least two periods of ethics a week in the school timetable, starting from the early childhood years. They can even be part of the religious education periods. It would be worth experimenting on combining both Muslims and Christians during these periods that would encourage tolerance and acceptance of the other.

Many schools and teachers can integrate ethics throughout the curriculum. At the same time I hope that the Ministry of Education will realise the need for this and that both parents and teachers will cooperate in bringing up a new generation that will enjoy living in a society that respects and promotes the common good. We need to give our young generation the hope that this is possible and that they can have a role in this change.

Samia Khoury is a retired community volunteer. She is the author of Reflections from Palestine – A Journey of Hope, published by Rimal, and A Rhyme for Every Time, published by Turbo. Her reflections are published on her blog, reflectionsfrompalestine.blogspot.co.il.
motivated by the desire both to explore Palestinian schooling practices during the past century and to learn about some educational innovations, I carried out a small research project entitled “The History of Mathematics Education in Palestine,” which was supported by the Scientific Research Committee at Birzeit University. Given the paucity of documentation of the educational system in Palestine, I believed that there would be significant historical value in understanding how Palestinians have been learning (and teaching) mathematics over time. The study draws a detailed image of the daily life in schools (teaching, classrooms, etc.) and the educational discourse before and after the Nakba as it poses questions such as: How was classroom teaching conducted? What aids or means were used? Were there textbooks? How many students were in the classroom? What kinds of facilities were used?

I interviewed 17 people (in their 60s and 70s) in the West Bank and Gaza. Because of travel limitations imposed on Palestinians by the Israeli occupation authorities, I could not interview Palestinians in Jerusalem or in Israel. However, I interviewed one person from Nazareth who was visiting Ramallah, and my graduate students interviewed two respondents in Jerusalem. The interviews in Gaza were conducted by a researcher from Gaza.

Telling the story of educational life in schools and understanding the discourse of Palestinian education has significant benefits. First, education has always been central to Palestinian life. Half of all Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are currently in the general or higher educational system, either as students or teachers, and therefore education is a potent tool for change and development. I want to explore the connection between changes in Palestinian society, including increasing passivity, and views of education – for example, relying solely on teachers to give students knowledge or engaging together to actively construct knowledge. Exploring the history of education provides insight into current social trends and the possibility for change.

Second, the performance of Palestinian students in mathematics is very poor, as indicated in international studies (e.g., Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS); Matar, 2009) and at the national level (Masad, 1998). Understanding the history of mathematics education has intrinsic value for helping to improve performance.

Third, I chose mathematics not just because it is my specialisation and interest but also because it is a subject...
of “power” over people. Mathematics is taught as though it were cross-cultural and universal, having nothing to do with people’s lives. For example, one reads this statement in our mathematics textbooks (and in many other textbooks around the world): “The sum of the angles of a triangle is 180 degrees” – in Arabic this statement has neither verb nor doer/subject. Some studies suggest that connecting the teaching and learning of mathematics with personal and historical narratives could improve pedagogy and performance (Fauvel and Maanen, 2000).

These stories have the potential to inspire the current generation of teachers and learners by grounding them in their history and infusing them with a sense of possibility and hope. On one hand, studying the way mathematics has been taught throughout the generations in Palestine is a powerful tool for analysing social and political changes in Palestinian society (Fasheh, 1997). On the other hand, understanding the evolution of mathematics education as a social practice carries real potential for improving student performance.

Some preliminary results

There are some preliminary results from this study. (I should mention that there is still a need to analyse all the interviews before coming to any general conclusions.) The first finding is that Palestinians take pride in and value education; they have considered it a priority for a long time. This was also revealed in the interviews. In addition to the fact that most students had to walk long distances to get to their schools, Palestinians during the Nakba built tents and used them as school classrooms. Abdel Qader (originally born in Sabbareen, Haifa, before 1948; his family lived in Jenin for a year after the Nakba and later moved to Tulkarem) remembers: “The school in Janzour (near Jenin) was in tents…. During an intense storm in 1950 the tents were destroyed by the wind and the rain.”

Furthermore, the school – because of the small number of students and the difficulties in transportation – had more than one grade in the same tent, and teachers were teaching two different grades at the same time. As far as I understand, this practice also existed in schools in some Palestinian villages at least until 2010.

Another issue is the role of teachers. Most of the interviewees described their teachers as honest, devoted to their profession, and well-respected among the people. One interviewee commented, “It’s different from the current situation where new teachers are ready to leave the school for another job.” Although interviewees described their teachers as devoted, the modes of teaching were similar to the current mode – rote memorisation. This was also the case for mathematics.

Most of the people I interviewed could not remember the details of how they learnt mathematics; neither the kind of problems to be solved nor the tools used in teaching. However, they still remember the topics: algorithm, algebra, and geometry. No textbooks were found. But there is still a need to investigate more about the quality of teaching and learning mathematics.

A final relevant issue is the arrangement of the class, which was very similar to the current situation: desks arranged in rows that face a blackboard on which teachers write.

While these impressions were common among the interviewees, it is clear that there is an urgent need to explore some of the innovative educational experiences of the past, such as those of Khalil Sakakini and Khalil Abu Rayya; and Hisab Li-Htaita.

Innovative educational experiences

Khalil Sakakini is a well-known educator, though his vision and philosophy are not yet widespread among Palestinians. Dr. Munir Fasheh has much to share about the experience of Sakakini in establishing various schools in Jerusalem and in challenging the educational policy of the British Mandate in Palestine. In addition to his educational vision, Sakakini had a political position and, in my opinion, they were intertwined. (I wonder whether it is even possible to separate education from social, cultural, and political realities.) According to Fasheh, for example, one of the main educational contributions of Sakakini is the belief that learning occurs in context. I agree with Fasheh and would suggest that a consequence of this vision is that we Palestinians have to (re)think our own way of learning and teaching, taking into consideration our context, especially during this time in our history when most, if not all of us complain about general and higher education.

Sakakini’s educational and political approaches are revealed in the titles of his books:

الاحتراء بحذاء الغير (Wearing Someone Else’s Shoes) and عليه نفس (By the Same Token). The former is a critique of adopting others’ values and practices uncritically without adapting them to one’s own context. The latter is giving the learner an agency of learning (Arabic, in particular), since Sakakini, rather than giving rules for teaching Arabic grammar, presents examples and asks the students to extract the methods and principles and apply them to other new problems.

Although Fasheh was not taught by Sakakini himself, he considers himself lucky since the principal of his school was Khalil Abu Rayya, a student of Sakakini. “In 1956 when Britain, France, and Israel attacked Egypt (Tripartite Aggression) … all our studies and everything else were connected to what was happening in Egypt,” Fasheh recalls. “In deference to Sakakini’s ‘learning in context,’ Abu Rayya arranged weekly hiking trips designed to get to know Ramallah. There would be
no school on Saturdays, so teachers and students could walk in nature." Fasheh’s eyes sparkled with excitement as he remembered those days: “I have loved hiking ever since, and it has become my favourite hobby.”

Hisab Li-HTaita: One of the issues I explored is whether Palestinians ever used textbooks in school before the Nakba, and if so, whether any of them are still around. Most people indicated that there were no textbooks. One of the people I interviewed, Mr. Mohammad Batrawi (who has since passed away), told me that his mathematics teacher Mr. Hussain Nijm used to teach them algorithm (hisab) from a text that he had prepared, entitled Hisab Li-HTaita (حساب الحطيطة). This was in the 1940s in Isdud (Ashdod). Mr. Batrawi could not remember anything from that text. I hope to find the text since it is a nice example of innovation and care on the part of some teachers, and it is an important piece of educational history. It might also be an indication that some teachers had to tailor materials to suit student needs, as opposed to the present situation, where textbooks are given as set lesson plans.

**Conclusion**

This is a modest attempt to talk about education in Palestine, and I chose to focus on the importance of studying the history of education in order to gain a greater understanding of the Palestinian education system. There are two issues that I would like to highlight in this context. First, the mode of teaching in Palestinian schools is dominated by rote learning and memorising facts and events rather than by critical and creative thinking. This issue makes me wonder how much education in Palestine has improved in terms of what we teach and how we teach it. Here I want to point out the time-related urgency of conducting this research now, before the pre-Nakba generation of students and teachers passes on.* Second, there is a vital need to study successful innovative experiences such as that of Sakakini. Speaking about the advantages of the Dostoreyah School in 1911, Sakakini made a statement that is, in my opinion, inspiring, even if more than 100 years have passed: “The principles upon which the school is based include honour of the pupil rather than humiliation; growth rather than regression; and an increase in freedom rather than in restrictions. In addition, there will be no punishment, no rewards, and no grades.” (http://www.schoolarabia.net/toroq_tadrees_arabi/khalil_alskani/ktha_ana/1.htm)

The documentation of such innovative practices will offer hope for new generations.

Jehad Alshwaikh is assistant professor of mathematics education at the Faculty of Education, Birzeit University. He is interested in communication and representation in mathematics discourse where he focuses on diagrams, language, and gestures in learning and teaching mathematics. His last research project (2012–13) was entitled “Analysing Palestinian School Mathematics Textbooks” in cooperation with Professor Candia Morgan (Institute of Education/University of London) and supported by the British Academy.

Article photos courtesy of UNRWA.

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**References**


* Unfortunately, three of the people I interviewed have already died.
There are many fairy tales about how to be a good teacher, such as the traditional chalk-talk scenario, where teachers give a one-way talk to their students. Some teachers even follow the protocol of “Don’t smile at your students until Christmas.” But there are teachers who choose a different philosophy in teaching: they choose to travel each and every highway to do things their way, just like Frank Sinatra! Just to satisfy your curiosity, in case you assume that this article will give you a road map or an innovation spawned in the excitement of writing about a teaching experience: it will not!

John Ciardi once said: “The classroom should be an entrance into the world, not an escape from it.” Teaching means creating a culture of knowing the answers to “But, why?” and “But, how?” that will enable students to open their hearts and minds to reveal the riches within. More than 2,000 years ago Socrates knew that “genuine education” is the way to elicit the spark of truth inspired by a rich environment that is conducive to reciprocal learning and teaching. Imagine, then, a teaching context where you teach Arabic to non-native speakers! You have a diverse student body, with people from various cultures who possess different values, learning in a dynamic environment inside and outside the classroom. What a challenge! This is the challenge and opportunity faced at the PAS (Palestine and Arabic Studies) programme, Birzeit’s Arabic language programme for foreigners.

In “Language and Freedom,” Noam Chomsky declares: “Language is a process of free creation; its laws and principles are fixed, but the manner in which the principles of generation are used is free and infinitely varied. Even the interpretation and use of words involves a process of free creation.” (Resonance 4.3, 1999, pp. 86–104) From personal experience as a teacher, I know that it takes a long time to understand the dichotomy of fixed laws vs. free creation since this dichotomy changed every time I taught a class in a different way.

Chomsky’s stance regarding language as a process of free creation raises many questions for language teachers. They must ask themselves if teaching really can be an act of free creation, if learning can be inside-out, and, if so, will it be possible for teachers to break the boundaries of the classroom environment? If language is a process of free creation then its beholders cannot be free!

And then, in addition to these questions, there are the challenges posed by teaching in Palestine. Teachers here must work within a fixed educational system. How can teachers transfer the process of second-language learning into real communicative situations to teach learners how to acquire language in a place that is under siege? Can language be taught using culture in motion when there is no movement? Palestinian teachers must listen to their students’ thinking and help them adapt or integrate while they are learning a foreign language with their peers in a land whose people are denied their basic right to education!

Language and culture are two concepts that give the impression that they are separate entities. Nothing is further from the truth. Language and culture are interrelated and inseparable because language is an integral part of culture. Within the PAS environment, souls from different cultures have the chance to mingle. Such a philosophy gives profundity, intensity, and meaning to the concept of language and cultural immersion.

This may sound like poetry instead of one more fascinating article that documents how traditional our Palestinian educational system is. Once more, it’s not! Change can be fostered in students if we listen to the whispers of nature because nature creates art, and teaching is an art. Then we become like Mahmoud Darwish:

Who am I? This is a question that others ask, but has no answer.

I am my language, I am an ode, two odes, ten. This is my language. I am my language.

I am words’ writ: Be! Be my body!
And I become an embodiment of their timbre.

I am what I have spoken to the words:
Be the place where my body joins the eternity of the desert.
Be, so that I may become my words.
There is a global upsurge among internationals who want to visit Palestine and learn how to read Standard Arabic and/or speak colloquial Arabic, understand Palestinian cultural patterns and norms, and learn about the Palestinian question. Arabic courses should be designed to teach the language as an integral part of the culture, and combined with social science courses to shift experiences from textbooks to life, providing analyses of Arab and Palestinian issues in the disciplines of politics, sociology, literature, and history.

Language immersion takes place through “experiential learning,” which is a process by which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences. As one teacher said, “We give students a chance to see the door in a camp instead of merely listening to teachers describe it in a classroom. We allow them to be active witnesses instead of passively having to rely on the teacher as their local informer! When a Palestinian living in a camp invites students inside for a cup of tea, as second-language speakers they need to search there and then for the word tea, and it will be hard to find it if their culture does not offer them a cup of tea every five-metres when they’re out for a walk.” So let the students be challenged culturally as well as linguistically to see whether their linguistic ability can meet the challenge. This method of teaching Arabic is driven by invoking the students’ curiosity and motivation to learn. The process of making language by direct experience is cultivated and enriched by touching on cultural projects that operate under the principle that language learning occurs when instruction emphasises full immersion.

As much as language is a reflection of culture, it also reflects geography. Field trips are indispensable in revealing Arabic cultural geography. A student commented: “It was completely different to see and literally smell reality first-hand in Salfit…. We finished our trip like true Palestinians, by eating homemade musakhan and dancing the dabke.” Field trips to Palestinian towns, villages, and refugee camps; hiking and climbing excursions; and theatrical and musical performances promote cultural integration for the students. Embedded within language and cultural experiences are hopes, emotions, desires, reflections, and an understanding of what it means to live in Palestine. A Japanese student told me, “The other day I went to Beit Liqya for a barbeque at my friend’s house. After a tea break, my friend’s uncle gave us a ride to the mountain of Beit Liqya. There were only rocks and thorns. There were no roads on the mountain. Actually my friend told me that we would climb the mountain, but I didn’t really understand what he meant. After 30 minutes of adventure, we had almost reached the top of the mountain, and then we stopped to eat. Afterwards we climbed higher. When I saw the apartheid wall that runs through the beautiful scenery, I felt sad. I hope to visit again during the olive harvest.”

This could also apply to Palestinians and not only to foreigners. The process of learning a language and integrating it as part of our culture is a revolutionary idea that gets students out of the boring conventional classroom settings and into the practical use of their own language as a means of communication that has been developed over centuries in Palestine. As one Palestinian volunteer who works with international students said, “It is pivotal to acknowledge that courses and trips are better taught and coordinated by Palestinians who have both lived through and studied this dynamic culture, thus ensuring that the Palestinian narrative is heard rather than silenced.”

Personal experience has taught me that the benefits of teaching the Arabic language outside the confines of the classroom setting are multi-faceted as it shapes the way teaching takes place and becomes learner-centred. First, in this context, teaching is transformed into cultural tools that are adaptive, spontaneous, and diversified to match various learning needs with different learning styles. These cultural tools include clothes, tonality, body language, and gestures that infer a deep sense of values, beliefs, and dreams. Second, deep learning and productive interaction occur from the cooperative learning atmosphere that emerges when students work together outside the classroom in heterogeneous groups. Third, and most importantly, learning experiences outside the classroom are interdisciplinary, as learners are forced to engage in elaboration, interpretation, explanation, and argumentation from different perspectives as they become conscious of their own learning. Without a doubt, language, by definition, is a way to describe knowledge. Nevertheless, it is knowledge of language itself that encourages students to develop their initiative, motivation, and resourcefulness.

“Behind every door, there is a story.” Another major strand in the discourse about why teaching Arabic outside the classroom environment is important is defined by the setting or physical environment. The process of discovering time and space influences the style of language that piques the curiosity of learners and invites them to listen to and affirm the story of a refugee whose history has yet to be discovered by the learner. “I came to Palestine to study Arabic. Why Palestine? Back home I was asked this
question more than often. My usual answer is: Why not? In the West people are afraid to come because of the news and the headlines. They don’t dare to come to get their own impression of this magnificent country and its wonderful people. If they did they would stop asking questions like Why Palestine?"

Another stimulating component in the teaching of Arabic appears evident in the sociolinguistics or scientific study of language variations that precipitate more questions among learners and encourage them to continue to explore meanings, observe, record, describe, and ultimately be involved. A funny incident highlights the regional differences witnessed during visits to Palestinian families. Waiting in line beside a shop, a huge old Haj uttered in a husky voice: “Ma tifadalou,” which has a negative meaning in some areas (“You are not welcome at all”), but a positive one in other areas (“Please come in!”). Mesmerised, our students tried to analyse his facial expression to see whether he was content or annoyed and thereby decide whether to run or to stay! These interludes provide powerful inferences about retaining a sense of recognition and not giving up.

Let the child of Palestine, Handala, return home! Celebrating an agonised past, teaching Arabic as a second language in the land of olives is considered a homecoming. This act reveals the importance of preserving the Arabic language as a means of safeguarding our cultural, national, and social identity, and resisting the occupation. Reciting anecdotes, exploring Palestinian folklore through colloquial language, and teaching Standard Arabic as part of the intellectual identity only depicts realms yet to be explored and documented here in Palestine. Teaching Arabic is above all an act of resistance, a means of explaining oneself to others, to the world, and mostly to oneself. A direct learning outcome of such interactions that occur outside the classroom environment is the creation of an effective community of learners that takes its cues from local Palestinian and international youth who are thinking for themselves. It is therefore important to continue to help learners to take charge of their own learning and thinking through cultural exposure. It is our mother tongue, and God knows how precious a mother can be!

We don’t only teach Arabic, we live it! If this adventure has “a final and all-embracing motive, it is surely this: we go out because it is in our nature to go out, to climb mountains” (Wilfrid Noyce), to pick olives, and to sing mijana. It is only natural to wake up every Friday to the sound of “Kaek! Kaek!” from a young schoolboy selling bread in the old city of Jerusalem as he searches for a better future in Palestine. By teaching “our way” we engage with something beyond the linguistic dimension, we live the language.

Tina Jaber Rafidi is currently the PAS director and works as an English language lecturer at the Department of Languages and Translation at Birzeit University. She is a specialised consultant in English language teaching, professional and teacher training, and curriculum development. She holds a master’s degree in gender, law, and development, and a second master’s degree in education and TEFL. She is especially interested in current education reforms and teacher training for public and private schools in the region.
Munir Fasheh stands out as someone who takes the best of our Palestinian educational heritage and continuously adapts it to our current reality. He has touched and influenced my life and the lives of many others. Unlike most of his peers, Munir Fasheh doesn’t block out and ridicule the “change” and struggles of the new generation; he embraces and accepts them. His words to me are always about living life with hope rather than with expectations.

The son of a Jerusalem family, the young Munir was able to experience Palestinian life fully in his city for seven years before the horrible exodus of Al-Nakba. He was able to absorb the essence of the wisdom developed by the famous Palestinian educator Khalil Sakakini and passed on to his student Khalil Abu Rayya, who was Munir’s school principal. His first main influence, however, was his mother; a brilliant tailor who exercised her own know-how to create something useful with numbers. Her knowledge was acquired by practice outside school classrooms and Western forms of education.

It was the 1967 Al Naksa that was a turning point for Munir and many Palestinians at the time. Before that he was subject to the hollow hierarchies of the academic world and totally engulfed in formal teaching at Birzeit College (which later became Birzeit University). The impact of Al-Naksa made him realise that math teachers “were able to solve problems that are meaningless, but they have no clue what to do with real problems in life (...) Using numbers to measure intelligence and the worth of a person (called evaluation) corrupts people and communities in a deep but invisible way.”

He finally realised that his illiterate mother’s math as a tailor, which he could neither understand nor do, was in fact more useful and real than anything he had learnt in college. Munir describes this revelation as an “intellectual earthquake.” Despite being a Harvard PhD graduate, Munir changed his whole view on “expertise” and specialisation, and started viewing them as something that conflicts with the nature of knowledge. Prefixes such as Dr. and Eng. were all designed to rank humans in groups that have nothing to do with their intelligence or value. Acting on his new belief system, he encouraged students to form math and science clubs and published a magazine on the teaching and learning of math.

During the first Palestinian Intifada (late 1980s) he left academia and established Tamer Institute for Community Education, which revolved around protecting and providing productive “learning environments.” He then went on to establish the Arab Education Forum and other initiatives that aim to spread his ideas on a pan-Arab scale. Between 1997 and 2007, Munir visited 29 countries to discuss how learning could be done in harmony with various local contexts and cultures.

He is currently trying to establish a “Home of Wisdom” college (based on the name of the first university established 1,100 years ago in Baghdad), where the learning concept of mujawara can be applied in action. He stresses that there is no dream or ideal school; this concept emerges from the consumption pattern of living where schools, students, and knowledge are treated as commodities. Education should instead mirror life, and each student must choose the path that is closest to her/his interest.

Grassroots Jerusalem’s Wujood: The Grassroots Guide to Jerusalem, is the first political tourist guide of Al-Quds (Jerusalem), the capital of Palestine. While emphasising the unique attractions offered by this age-old city, Wujood (“existence/presence”) draws a picture of the realities of Jerusalemite Palestinian communities from a grassroots perspective. The guide invites visitors to take an active part in supporting the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice, either by volunteering, supporting the Palestinian economy, or simply by comprehending the bigger picture of the political reality in the city today.

Wujood profiles 38 Palestinian communities within the historic Jerusalem district; Al-Quds as the Palestinians understand it – neither east nor west, defined by neither the Annexation Wall nor imposed municipal borders. For this reason, the guide also includes a list of 1948 Nakba displaced communities, listed by their original Arabic Palestinian names.

In line with the philosophy of Grassroots Jerusalem, Wujood identifies 78 grassroots initiatives and organisations that are leading the struggle for freedom and justice in Jerusalem. It is more than just a tourist guide to sites and places – it is an invitation to discover the real Jerusalem by meeting the people that make this city a vibrant and dynamic place to live. Wujood transcends your average tourist guide by providing suggestions on how to travel responsibly by supporting local economies and amplifying Jerusalemite community voices. It also directs those interested in supporting Palestinian communities to the organisations and initiatives that best reflect the visions of these communities.

One unique feature of Wujood is that it includes a newly developed community-based map of Al-Quds. This map documents and preserves the Palestinian names of the neighbourhoods that make up Al-Quds. As the book states, the map is a direct response to the on-going Zionisation of the Jerusalem district: “Streets, public buildings and landmarks are gradually relabelled by the Israeli authorities and given Hebrew names. Thus maps used in schools … for tourist and historical reference serve the historic Zionist narrative regardless of objective reality: ‘A land without a people for a people without a land.’” (Wujood, p. 34)

Perhaps Wujood’s greatest strength is that it was created through a participatory process with the communities that it profiles, acting as a megaphone for community voices. Inside this guide one will find ethical purchasing maps designed by local activists, photographs taken by local photographers, and community stories as told by community members.

There are several guides that provide a political context for Al-Quds, but none speak to the reader through the actual voices of the communities themselves, as this book does. Wujood is, finally, a magnificently framed portrait of this region through the lens of community resistance to occupation. This is a must-read for anyone who seeks to develop a critical awareness of the real story of Al-Quds.

Wujood can be purchased in Jerusalem at the Educational Bookshop and at Grassroots Jerusalem’s office in Sheikh Jarrah.
Osama Nazzal

Based on an interview by Ahmad Damen

The young Osama Nazzal found himself smitten with art and drawing at a young age. Mesmerised by illustrations and crayons, his journey began with simple sketches on white paper during his first-grade art class. His family encouraged him and provided him with various sorts of tools and colours to pursue his passion.

Nazzal’s nine-year-old imagination was influenced heavily by his surroundings during his childhood years in Kuwait. During that time the Gulf War was raging, and its elements were evident through his sketches of soldiers, drones, tanks, and bombings. Eventually, the Nazzal family fled back to Palestine, where Osama would continue with his art and ultimately take it to the next level.

It was then that he began to lean towards a particular kind of art: cartooning. His main inspiration was the legendary Palestinian master Naji Al-Ali, whose work has prompted Nazzal to look out for political cartoons in every newspaper that he gets his hands on.

He thinks of cartoons as a way to reflect on the political situation and critique his society. Sarcasm seems to be a way in which the most controversial topics can be discussed with more freedom if the right touch of humour is in place.

Despite two years of undergraduate studies at a local university, Nazzal’s passion for art led him to switch colleges. It was a bit difficult for his family to accept this decision, but he eventually enrolled at an academy in Ramallah and earned a certificate in contemporary visual arts.

Before 1998, he would just sketch caricatures and give them away to some of his friends. Thus his artwork remained in the shadows. Later on, he decided to start archiving his own work and pursued his desire to publish his cartoons in newspapers. It was four years later that his first cartoon was finally published.

Following in the footsteps of Naji Al-Ali and other Palestinian cartoonists such as Baha Boukhari and Khalil Abu Arafah, Nazzal created a central character for his political cartoons. In his character “Abu Ali,” he sees a typical Palestinian man struggling through occupation and fighting for his own and his family’s freedom.

Following the second Intifida, Nazzal was arrested by the Israeli Army in 2005 and sentenced to six and a half years in Israeli prisons. He was able to continue to draw cartoons during his incarceration at Ofer Prison, making use of the few materials his father had brought him during family visits. Some of his finished cartoons made it out of prison and were published in newspapers. However, when he was transferred to another prison in the Negev, the prison guards found and confiscated 50 of his cartoons. He was threatened by the Israelis and banned from drawing again, yet Nazzal defied the threats and continued to draw. He was released after two years as part of a prisoner-release agreement.

Nazzal believes in the simplicity and power of cartoons as a means of expression. This makes them a popular choice for a wide range of audiences, much wider than the typical newspaper audience. Such a factor makes cartoons an artist’s ultimate gateway into the political arena.
WUJOUD Museum

WUJOUD (Arabic for “existence”) is situated in the heart of Jerusalem’s Christian Quarter and includes an ethnographic museum, a cultural centre, and a cafeteria. Housed in a 650-year-old building, it also enjoys a rooftop veranda with lovely views of the Old City, including an exclusive view of Hezekiah’s Pool (Bath of the Patriarchs), a Biblical-era water reservoir.

The building was constructed during the Mamluk period, transformed into a military coffee house during the Ottoman era, used as residential homes during the British Mandate and Jordanian rule, and then neglected for decades. Rehabilitation of the building began in 2008; the museum was inaugurated on May 14, 2011.

WUJOUD offers a glimpse of Palestinian daily life from the eighteenth century until the early twentieth century. It houses more than 400 historical items from all over the region, including antique furniture, cooking equipment, local musical instruments, and a rich collection of regional textile embroidery.

WUJOUD is a place of cultural interaction for people of all faiths and all denominations who can come to meet and share culture and stories.

Contact WUJOUD to arrange a visit, a special tour, or a delicious traditional Palestinian meal (light breakfast, lunch, or dinner) prepared by local Palestinian women. The entire facility can fit 120 people to enjoy traditional Palestinian food. The cultural centre’s lounge can seat up to 70 persons.

“Culture draws people together and builds bridges for tolerance, peace, and reconciliation. Above all, beauty and humanity transcend all borders,” says Nora Kort, founder of the museum and chairwoman of the Arab Orthodox Society.

For more information, check the WUJOUD website at www.araborthodoxsociety.com, or contact us at 02-626-0916 (tel.) or 02-627-2625 (fax).

The Arab Orthodox Society-Jerusalem Inside Jaffa Gate, before the Christian Quarter, Old City, Jerusalem P.O. Box 211, Jerusalem
The first Intifada, which began in 1987, was one of the most important and meaningful uprisings in Palestinian history: it was simple, heartfelt, and, perhaps most importantly, organised largely from a grassroots level. Thousands of Palestinians took part in mainly peaceful protests and demonstrations, and the uprising came to be known as “The Stones Revolution.”

The subject of the 1987 Intifada is now to be documented in Gaza in an archiving project that specifically addresses issues such as people’s daily lives at the time and the customs and traditions that have since disappeared from Palestinian society. Contemporary art will acquaint the younger generation with the period of the uprising and remind the local population of this important stage in Palestinian history.

Sparked by an Israeli truck driver who ran down a group of Palestinian workers at the Erez Checkpoint that has divided Gaza from the rest of Palestine since 1948, the Intifada began on December 8, 1987, in Jabaliya in the Gaza Strip and soon spread to every town, village, and refugee camp in Palestine. After this first outburst, the organisation of the revolution was sustained by United National Palestinian Leadership and the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The uprising calmed down in 1991 and was finally brought to an end by the Oslo Agreement between Israel and the PLO in 1993.

The exhibition, in partnership with Eltiqa Group and Windows for Contemporary Art, is one of Qalandiya International’s many events. The following artists will participate in the exhibition: Rae’ed Issa, Mohamad Abusal, Sohail Salem, Moahmmed Al-Dabous, Abdel Raouf Al Ajouri, Dina Matar, Mohammed Al Hawajri, Shareef Sarhan, Basel El Maqousi, and Majed Shala.

The 1987 Intifada is known as the Stones Revolution because of the stones that were key amongst its weapons; the children who threw them are known as the Children of Stones. This Intifada was a form of spontaneous Palestinian popular protest against the generally miserable conditions in the refugee camps as well as the spread of unemployment, insults to human dignity, and daily oppression suffered by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation.

The 87 exhibition continues until November 15, 2014 and is open from 10:00 a.m. till 5:00 p.m. every day except Friday.
Wednesday 19
18:00 Western Wall Tunnels (the Old City), guided by Mr. Robin Abu Shamsiyeh, Centre for Jerusalem Studies (Al-Quds University)

Saturday 22
9:30 Ramallah Villages (Deir Ghassaneh and Abwein), in cooperation with RIWAQ, Centre for Jerusalem Studies (Al-Quds University)

Saturday 29
10:00 Ottoman Jerusalem (the Old City), guided by Hisham Khalib, Centre for Jerusalem Studies (Al-Quds University)

BETHLEHEM

CONCERTS
Friday 7
18:00 Terra Sancta Organ Festival, Church of St. Catherine at the Basilica of the Nativity

Friday 14
18:00 Terra Sancta Organ Festival, Church of St. Catherine at the Basilica of the Nativity

Friday 21
18:00 Terra Sancta Organ Festival, Church of St. Catherine at the Basilica of the Nativity

Friday 28
18:00 Terra Sancta Organ Festival, Church of St. Catherine at the Basilica of the Nativity

FILMS
Tuesday 4
14:00–15:30 The Jerusalem Show VII Film Screening Program, Dar Al-Kalima, College of Art and Culture, Bethlehem, organised by Al-Ma’amal

Wednesday 5
14:00–15:30 The Jerusalem Show VII Film Screening Program, Dar Al-Kalima, College of Art and Culture, organised by Al-Ma’amal

Thursday 6
14:00–15:30, The Jerusalem Show VII Film Screening Program, Dar Al-Kalima, College of Art and Culture, Bethlehem, organised by Al-Ma’amal

Friday 7
14:00–15:30, The Jerusalem Show VII Film Screening Program, Dar Al-Kalima, College of Art and Culture, organised by Al-Ma’amal

Tuesday 13
14:00–16:00 Film Screening: Sivas, The Jerusalem Show VII, Dar Al-Kalima, College of Art and Culture, organised by Al-Ma’amal

Gaza

EXHIBITIONS
Saturday 1 to Saturday 15
87, open 10.00–17.00 daily, except Fridays and national holidays, the premises of Elitqa Group and Windows for Contemporary Art, Al-Rimal, Gaza

NABLUSS

EXHIBITIONS
Monday 10
Cinema Filistin, a photo exhibition by Julius Matuschik, documenting the cinema landscape in Palestine, French Institute, Nablus

QALANDIYA

CONFERENCES
Saturday 8
11:00–13:00 Press conference to launch The Family Album, Child Center for Culture and Development, Qalandiya Refugee Camp, Your Pictures, Your Memory, Our History project seeks to discover the photographic treasures hidden away in the houses of many people. The project provides rich resources and valuable material for research and various creative projects. Organised by the Palestinian Museum.

RAMALLAH/AL-BIREH

BOOK LAUNCH
Saturday 1
17:00–18.00, Ghassan Resurrected by Dr. Yasmine Zahran, Mahmoud Darwish Museum, Galeille Hall, organised by the Ramallah Municipality
FILMS
Wednesday 12
16:00–17:30 Film Screening Program: The Jerusalem Show VII, International Academy of Art Palestine, organised by Al-Ma'amal, in collaboration with the International Academy of Art Palestine

18:00–19:30 Film Screening Program: The Jerusalem Show VII, International Academy of Art Palestine, organised by Al-Ma'amal, in collaboration with the International Academy of Art Palestine

Saturday 15
18:00 Die Vermessung Der Welt (German with English subtitles), Mahmoud Darwish Museum

Thursday 20
15:30 Das Kleine Gespenst (German with English subtitles), French-German Cultural Center

LECTURES
Monday 3
10:30–12:00 Artist Talk with Lia Perjovschi, International Academy of Art Palestine, organised by A.M. Qattan Foundation

Thursday 6
13:00–15:00 See You in The Hague, International Academy of Art Palestine, organised by International Academy of Art Palestine

SPECIAL EVENTS
Tuesday 4
17:00–18:00 Ramallah 1964 Seen in 2014, Ottoman Court Building, outdoor amphitheatre, performed by Jumana Daibs and a group of dancers, organised by the Ramallah Municipality

Wednesday 5
18:00–20:00 Symposium Ottoman Ramallah, A Retrospective, Mahmoud Darwish Museum, Galilee Hall, organised by the Ramallah Municipality, in partnership with the Institute for Palestine Studies (IPS)

Wednesday 12
16:00–18:00 Opening of Science Days Palestine 2014. Palestine is celebrating its largest science spectacle with over 150 events from Nazareth to Rafah. The event will include science films, science cafés, astronomical viewings, and many experiments in over 20 locations, the Palestinian Red Crescent Association Hall, Al-Bireh

18:00–19:00 Poetry reading by Zuhair Abu Shayeb, Ramallah Public Library, organised by the Ramallah Municipality

TOURS
Sunday 2
08:30–15:30 The Museum of Mathematics and Abu Jihad Museum for Prisoner Movement, Abu Dis University, organised by The Palestinian Museum

Tuesday 11
8:00–17:00 The Battir Environment Museum, the Natural History Museum, and the Bank of Palestine private collection in Bethlehem. Buses leave at 8:00 from The Palestinian Museum temporary offices in Ramallah, 5 Al-Sahel Street, organised by the Palestinian Museum. For registration, please contact the Palestinian Museum at 297-4797.

Saturday 22
10:00 RIWAQ, Ramallah Villages (Deir Ghassin, Abwein), in cooperation with the Centre for Jerusalem Studies (Al-Quds University). Buses leave at 8:30 from the Palestinian Museum’s temporary offices in Ramallah, 5 Al-Sahel Street. For registration, please contact the Palestinian Museum at 297-4797.

WORKSHOPS
Saturday 1
14:00–16:00 Students workshop, Inside the Archive, Ramallah Cultural Palace, organised by A.M. Qattan Foundation in collaboration with International Academy of Art Palestine

Monday 3
12:00–15:00 Student workshop: Art (between “Design Your Self” and “Funky Business”), International Academy of Art Palestine, organised by A.M. Qattan Foundation in collaboration with International Academy of Art Palestine

Monday 10
13:00–6:00 workshop with Zuhair Abu-Shayeb on designing book covers, Ramallah Public Library. Registration required with Ramallah Municipality – Public Library (h.freij@ramallah.ps), organised by Ramallah Municipality. The workshop is six days long.

TULKAREM
TOURS
Monday 10
8:00–17:00 The Tulkarem and Samaritan museums and talk at Tel Balata Museum, “Theft of Artefacts and the Role of Government in Preserving Heritage,” Tel Balata Museum and archaeological site. Speakers: Amin Farkh and Saleh Tawabseh. Buses leave at 8:00 from the Palestinian Museum’s temporary office in Ramallah, 5 Al-Sahel Street. For registration, please contact the Palestinian Museum at 297-4797.
**CULTURAL CENTRES**

**EAST JERUSALEM (02)**

ARTLAB
Mob: 0544 343 796, artlabjerusalem@gmail.com

Al-Jawal Theatre Group
Tel: 628 0655

Al-Ma’mal Foundation for Contemporary Art
Tel: 628 3457, Fax: 627 2312
info@almalamfoundation.org
www.almalamfoundation.org

Aliruwah Theatre
Tel: 626 2626, aliruwantheatre2000@yahoo.com

Al-Urmawi Centre for Masreq Music
Tel: 234 2005, Fax: 234 2004
info@alurjorg.com, www.urmai.org

America House
http://jerusalem.us consulate.gov/americahouse2.html

Ashstar for Theatre Productions & Training
Tel: 562 7218
info@ashtast.com, www.ashtar-theatre.org

British Council
Tel: 625 7111, Fax: 628 3021
information@ps.britishcouncil.org
www.britishcouncil.org/pj

Centre for Jerusalem Studies/Al-Quds University
Tel: 625 7117, cjs@palestine.edu
www.jerusalem-studies.alquds.edu

Community Action Centre (CAC)
Tel: 625 3352, Fax: 625 4547
www.cac.alquds.edu

Educational Bookshop
Tel: 627 5858, Fax: 628 0814
info@educationalbookshop.com
www.educationalbookshop.com

El-Hakawati Theatre Company
Tel: 593 898, Mobile: 0593 835 286
f.abousalem@gmail.com, www.alhakawati.org

French Cultural Centre
Tel: 583 8836, Mobile: 0545 835 268
f.abousalem@gmail.com, www.el-hakawati.org

Inad for Theatre and Arts
Tel: 229 0047, Fax: 229 0048
info@inadtheater.com, www.inadtheatert.com

International Centre of Bethlehem-Dar Annadwa
Tel: 277 7141, Fax: 277 7142
info@inadtheater.com, www.inadtheatre.com

Jericho Community Centre
Tel: 625 3007
Jericho Culture & Art Centre
Tel: 223 1047
Municipality Theatre
Tel: 233 2417, Fax: 233 2604

**BETHLEHEM (02)**

Al-Hararah Theatre
Tel: 276 7758, alharatham@yahoo.com
info@al-hararah.org, www.al-hararah.org

Alliance Française de Bethlehem
Tel: 275 0777, alberth@yahoo@pl.com

Anat Palestinian Folk & Craft Center
Tel: 277 2024, mane_musslam@yahoo.com

Arab Educational Institute (AEI)-Open Windows
Tel: 274 4030, www.aeicenter.org

Arts and Folklife Centre
Mob: 0597 524 524, 0599 679 492, 0503 313 136
info@hotmail.com

Badil Centre
Tel: 277 7086

Belit Jala Community-Based Learning and Action Center
Tel: 277 7863

Bethlehem Academy of Music/ Bethlehem Music Society
Tel: 277 7141, Fax: 277 7142

Bethlehem Peace Center
Tel: 276 6677, 276 6670
info@peacecenter.org, www.peacecenter.org

Catholic Action Cultural Center
Tel: 274 3277, 274 2999
info@cas-b.org, www.cas-b.org

Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation
Tel: 276 6242, Fax: 276 6241
info@cchp.ps, www.cchp.ps

Environmental Education Centre
Tel: 276 6574, eec@pol.com, www.eecp.org

Inad for Theatre and Arts
Tel: 276 6243, www.inadtheater.com

International Centre of Bethlehem-Dar Annadwa
Tel: 277 0047, Fax: 277 0048
info@diyarps, www.diyarps.com

ITIP Center “Italian Tourist Information Point”
Tel: 276 0407, info@iiph.org, www.iiph.org

Nativity Stationary Library
Mob: 0598 950 447

**HEBRON (02)**

Al Sanabl Centre for Studies and Heritage
Tel: 256 0256, sanabalsabab@yahoo.com
info@al-sabab.org, www.al-sabab.ps

Beit Et-Til Compound
Tel: 222 4455, tdpbevertor@alqudsnet.com

British Council- Palestine Polytechnic University
Tel: 223 3717, information@ps.britishcouncil.org
www.britishcouncil.org

Children Happiness Center
Tel: 256 0256, children.hc@yahoo.com

Dura Cultural Martys Center
Tel: 238 3663, naden@duramur.org
www.duramur.org

AMIDEAST
Tel: 221 3301/2/3/4, Fax: 221 3305
Mob: 0599 297 531

France-Hebron Association for Cultural Exchanges
Tel: 222 4311, info@hebron-france.org, www.hebron-france.org

Hebron Rehabilitation Committee
Tel: 225 5640, 222 6934/3

Palestinian Child Arts Center (PCAC)
Tel: 222 4311, Fax: 222 0655
pcac@hotmail.com, www.pcac.net

The Palestinian National Youth League (IPYL)
Tel: 222 9131, Fax: 222 0822
itv@ipyl.org, www.ipyl.org

Yes Theater
Tel: 229 1559, www.yestheatere.org, info@yestheatre.org

**JERICHO (02)**

**NABLUS (09)**

British Council- Al Najah University
Tel: 236 2523, Fax: 236 2524
info@alnajah.net, www.alnajah.net

Cultural Centre for Child Development
Tel: 238 6290, Fax: 239 7518

Cultural Heritage Enrichment Center
Tel: 237 2863, Fax: 237 8275
www.culturalheritagecenter.com

Cultural Transformation Centre
Tel: 238 5914, Fax: 238 7503
info@ctc.org, www.ctc.org

**RAMALLAH AND AL-BIREH (02)**

A. M. Qattan Foundation
Tel: 236 2044, Fax: 236 4586
info@qattanfoundation.org
www.qattanfoundation.org

Al Kasaba Theatre and Cinematheque
Tel: 236 2043, Fax: 236 2044
info@alkasaba.org, www.alkasaba.org

Al-Kamandjati Association
Tel: 257 3101
info@alkamandjati.org, www.alkamandjati.org

Al-Mada Music Therapy Center
Tel: 241 3196, Fax: 241 3197
info@al-mada.org, www.al-mada.org

Al-Rahilah Theatre
Tel: 238 8901, alrahilah@hotmail.com

Al-Rua’a Publishing House
Tel: 250 1613, Fax: 257 1265, Mob: 0599 259 874
akel.nichola@gmail.com

Amideast
Tel: 240 8023, Fax: 240 8017
westbank-gaza@amideast.org, www.amideast.org

ArtSchool Palestine
Tel: 250 9397, info@artschoolpalestine.com
www.artschoolpalestine.com

Ashtat for Theatre Production
Tel: 256 0037, Fax: 256 0036
info@ashtat.org, www.ashtat.org

Baladra Cultural Centre
Tel: 255 8435

Birzeit Ethnographic and Art Museum
Tel: 256 2576, www.virtualgallery.birzeit.edu

British Council
Tel: 256 2543, Fax: 256 2543
information@ps.britishcouncil.org
www.britishcouncil.org/palestine

Carmel Cultural Foundation
Tel: 236 7375, Fax: 236 7374

Dar Zahrani Heritage Building
Tel: 256 3470, Mob: 0599 511 800
info@darzahrani.org, www.darzahrani.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>EAST JERUSALEM (02)</strong></th>
<th><strong>BETHELHEM (02)</strong></th>
<th><strong>RAMALLAH AND AL-BIREH (02)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Al-Diwan (Ambassador Hotel)</strong> Middle Eastern, French, and Italian Cuisine Tel: 541 2213, Fax: 582 8262</td>
<td><strong>1890 Restaurant (Beit Jala)</strong> Tel: 277 8779 <a href="mailto:restaurant1890@gmail.com">restaurant1890@gmail.com</a></td>
<td><strong>911 Café</strong> Mexican, Italian, Oriental Tel: 296 6511</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alhambra Palace Jerusalem Restaurant &amp; Coffee Shop</strong> Tel: 620 3235, Fax: 620 3737 <a href="mailto:info@alhambrapalacej.com">info@alhambrapalacej.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Abu Eli Restaurant</strong> Middle Eastern and Barbecues Tel: 274 1997</td>
<td><strong>Andareen Pub</strong> Mob: 0599 258 435</td>
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<td><strong>Al-Manakeesh Pizza &amp; Pastries</strong> Tel: 586 6928</td>
<td><strong>Abu Shanab Restaurant</strong> Barbecues Tel: 274 2566</td>
<td><strong>Al Falaha Moreshan and Taboon</strong> Tel: 290 5124</td>
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<td><strong>Al-Shuleh Grill Shawarma and Barbecues</strong> Tel: 627 3768</td>
<td><strong>Alf breeze Restaurant Barbecues</strong> Tel: 274 2566</td>
<td><strong>Akasha</strong> Oriental Tel: 296 9335</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Amigo Emir</strong> Middle Eastern, American, Indian, and Italian Cuisine Tel: 628 8090, Fax: 628 1457</td>
<td><strong>Al-Areesah Palace</strong> (Jacir Palace – InterContinental Bethlehem) Middle Eastern and Barbecues Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6154</td>
<td><strong>Allegro Italian Restaurant</strong> (Movenpick Hotel Ramallah) Italian fine cuisine Tel: 296 5598</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Antonio’s (Ambassador Hotel)</strong> Middle Eastern, French, and Italian Cuisine Tel: 541 2213</td>
<td><strong>Al-Hakura Restaurant</strong> Middle Eastern and Fast Food Tel: 277 3335</td>
<td><strong>Al-Riwaa All-day-dining restaurant</strong> (Movenpick Hotel Ramallah) International, Swiss and Oriental cuisine Tel: 296 5588</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Arabesque, Poolside, and Patio Restaurants</strong> (American Colony Hotel) Western and Middle Eastern Menu Tel: 627 9777, Fax: 627 9779</td>
<td><strong>Al-Khayyeh (Jacir Palace – InterContinental Bethlehem)</strong> Middle Eastern and Barbecues Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6154</td>
<td><strong>Awjel</strong> Seafood, Breakfast, and Pizza, Coffee Shop, Lebanese and Italian Cuisine Tel: 297 1776</td>
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<td><strong>Armenian Tavern</strong> American and Middle Eastern Food Tel: 296 3854</td>
<td><strong>Al Makan Bar</strong> Tel: 276 6777, Fax: 276 6770</td>
<td><strong>Andre’s Restaurant French and Italian Cuisine Tel: 296 6477/8</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Askifina</strong> Italian and French Cuisine Tel: 532 4590</td>
<td><strong>Balolos Coffee Shop and Pizza</strong> Tel: 277 0221, Fax: 277 7115</td>
<td><strong>Angelo’s Western Menu and Pizza</strong> Tel: 295 6408, 298 1455</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Az-Zahra</strong> Oriental Food and Pizza Tel: 296 2447</td>
<td><strong>Barbara Restaurant</strong> Tel: 296 0130 <a href="mailto:barbaraguesthouse@hotmail.com">barbaraguesthouse@hotmail.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Ayysha Restaurant</strong> Oriental Cuisine Tel: 296 6622</td>
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<td><strong>Borderline Restaurant Café</strong> Italian and Oriental Menu Tel: 532 8342</td>
<td><strong>Beit Sahour Citadel</strong> Mediterranean Cuisine Tel: 277 7771</td>
<td><strong>Azure Restaurant and Coffee Shop Continental Cuisine Tel: 296 7865</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Burghouj</strong> Armenian and Middle Eastern Tel: 628 2072, Fax: 628 2080</td>
<td><strong>Bonjour Restaurant and Café Coffee Shop and Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 274 0406</td>
<td><strong>Baladna Ice Cream</strong> Ice Cream and Soft Drinks Tel: 295 6721</td>
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<td><strong>Cardo Restaurant Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 296 6706</td>
<td><strong>Christmas Bells Restaurants</strong> Oriental Cuisine Tel: 277 3336, Fax: 277 6337</td>
<td><strong>Bel Mondo</strong> Italian Cuisine Tel: 296 6759</td>
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<td><strong>Chinese Restaurant</strong> Chinese Cuisine Tel: 296 3465, Fax: 296 3471</td>
<td><strong>Dar al-Balad Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 274 0403</td>
<td><strong>Caesar’s (Grand Park Hotel)</strong> Continental Cuisine Tel: 296 6104</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Bookshop</strong> Books and Coffee Tel: 295 6758</td>
<td><strong>Diwan Café and Restaurant</strong> Tel: 275 7256 <a href="mailto:divanocafe@gmail.com">divanocafe@gmail.com</a></td>
<td><strong>Castelo Restaurant &amp; Café Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 297 3844/55</td>
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<td><strong>El Dorado Coffee Shop and Internet Café</strong> Chocolates, Coffee, and Internet Tel: 296 0993</td>
<td><strong>Grotto Restaurant Barbecues and Tattoos</strong> Tel: 274 8444, Fax: 274 8899</td>
<td><strong>Chinese House Restaurant</strong> Chinese Cuisine Tel: 296 4081</td>
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<td><strong>Flavours Grill</strong> International Cuisine with Mediterranean Flavour Tel: 297 4286</td>
<td><strong>Golden Roof Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 274 6264</td>
<td><strong>Clara restaurant and pub</strong> Mob: 0597 348 335</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Four Seasons Restaurants and Coffee Shop</strong> Barbecues and Shawarma Tel: 620 6061, Fax: 628 6997</td>
<td><strong>King Gaspar Restaurant &amp; Bar (Italian, Asian and Mediterranean Cuisine)</strong> Tel: 276 5301, Fax: 276 5302</td>
<td><strong>Dawud Bashah</strong> Tel: 297 4655</td>
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<td><strong>Gallery Café</strong> Snacks and Beverages Tel: 540 9974</td>
<td><strong>Illyeh Restaurant Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 277 0047</td>
<td><strong>Darna Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 295 0590/1</td>
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<td><strong>Garden’s Restaurant</strong> Tel: 581 6463</td>
<td><strong>Layal Lounge Snack Bar</strong> Tel: 277 6665</td>
<td><strong>Diwan Art Coffee Shop Continental Cuisine</strong> Tel: 296 6483</td>
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<td><strong>Goodies</strong> Fast Food Tel: 586 3233</td>
<td><strong>La Terraza</strong> Middle Eastern and Continental Cuisine Tel: 275 3678</td>
<td><strong>Do Re Mi Café</strong> (Royal Court) Continental Cuisine Tel: 296 4040</td>
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<td><strong>Kaan Zaman (Jerusalem Hotel)</strong> Mediterranean Cuisine Tel: 627 1556</td>
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<td><strong>Elite Coffee House</strong> Italian and Arabic Cuisine Tel: 296 5169</td>
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<td><strong>European Coffee Shop</strong> Coffee and Snacks Tel: 2951 7031, 296 6505</td>
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<td><strong>Express Pizza</strong> American Pizza Tel: 296 6566</td>
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<td><strong>Fakhrai El-Din</strong> Lebanese Cuisine Tel: 294 6800</td>
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<td><strong>Fawwanes Pastries and Fast Food</strong> Tel: 298 7046</td>
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<td><strong>Fatma Restaurant</strong> Barbecues, (Bizzetti) Mob: 0596 839 043</td>
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<td><strong>Fuego</strong> Mexican and Tapas Grill Tel: 295 0426 - 1700 999 888</td>
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<td><strong>Jasmine Café</strong> Tel: 295 0121</td>
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<td><strong>Janan’s Kitchen</strong> Tel: 297 5444</td>
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<td><strong>KSM - Caterers</strong> Café and Sweets Tel: 295 6813</td>
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<td><strong>Khuzaa Restaurant</strong> Oriental Cuisine Tel: 298 8289</td>
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<td><strong>La Vie Café</strong> Café, Bistro &amp; Bar Tel: 296 4115</td>
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<td><strong>La Vista Café and Restaurant</strong> Oriental and Western Cuisine Tel: 296 3271</td>
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<td><strong>Level 5</strong> Fusion European Tel: 298 9860</td>
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<td><strong>Cann Espresso</strong> Arabic and Italian Cuisine Tel: 297 2125</td>
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<td><strong>Mac Simon</strong> Pizza and Fast Food Tel: 297 2088</td>
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<td><strong>Martini Bar</strong> (Caesar Hotel) Tel: 297 9400</td>
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<td><strong>Mr. Donuts Café</strong> Donuts and Coffee Tel: 297 1216</td>
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<td><strong>Mr. Fish</strong> Seafood Tel: 295 9555</td>
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<td><strong>Mr. Pizza</strong> Pizza and Fast Food Tel: 297 3016, 297 4302</td>
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<td><strong>Muntaza Restaurant and Garden</strong> Barbecues and Sandwiches Tel: 295 6835</td>
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<td><strong>Na3Na3 Café</strong> Italian and Oriental Cuisine Tel: 295 4060</td>
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<td><strong>Nai Resto Café</strong> Angelique Mob: 0595 403 020</td>
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<td><strong>Newz Bar</strong> Lounge and “Le Gourmand” pastries’ corner</td>
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<td><strong>Movenpick Hotel Ramallah</strong> Tel: 298 5588</td>
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<td><strong>Osama’s Pizza</strong> Pizza and Fast Food Tel: 295 3270</td>
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<td><strong>Oriuwan Lounge</strong> Palestinian-Italian Fusion Tel: 297 6870</td>
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</tbody>
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GAZA STRIP (08)

Al Daar Barbecues
Tel: 285 6267
Al-Deira Mediterranean Cuisine
Tel: 286 8100/200/300
Fax: 283 8400
Almah'taf Mediterranean Cuisine
Tel: 285 6444, Fax: 285 8440
Al-Molouki Shawerma
Tel: 286 6387
Al-Salam seafood
Tel: 252 2705, Telefax: 293 3198
Avenue
Tel: 289 2100, 288 3100
Big Bite Fastfood
Tel: 293 9096
Carino's
Tel: 286 6343, Fax: 286 6353
LATERNA
Tel: 288 9881, Fax: 288 9882
Light House
Tel: 288 4884
Mama House
Telefax: 282 3322, 282 2624
Mazaj Coffee House
Tel: 286 8035
Mazaj Restaurant
Tel: 282 5003, Fax: 286 9078
Orient House
Telefax: 282 8000, 282 9004
Roots - The Club Oriental Cuisine
Tel: 286 9006, 282 9000, 282 3777
Abu Mazen Restaurant
Tel: 283 3333, Fax: 282 3111
Al Quds Restaurant
Tel: 223 7773, Fax: 229 7774
Golden Rooster
Tel: 221 6115
Hebron Restaurant
Telefax: 222 7773
Orient House Restaurant
Telefax: 221 1525
Royal Restaurant
Tel: 222 7210

MUSEUMS

East Jerusalem (02) Armenian Museum, Old City, Tel: 628 2331, Fax: 626 4861, Opening hours: Mon - Sat, from 9:00 - 16:30 • Dar At Tift Museum (Dar At Tift Association), Near the Orient House, Tel: 628 3251, Fax: 627 3477 • Islamic Museum (The Islamic Waqf Association), Old City, Tel: 628 3313. Fax 628 5561, opening hours for tourists: daily from 7:30 - 13:30 • Math Museum, Science Museum, Abu Jihad Museum for the Palestinian Prisoners Studies - Al-Quds University, Tel: 279 9753 - 279 0606. fyou@alquds.edu, opening hours Saturday - Wednesday: 8:30 - 15:00 • Qalandia Camp Women’s Handicraft Coop., Tel: 293 9385, Fax: 585 6966, qalandia@palnet.org • WUJOUD Museum, Tel: 626 0916, Fax: 027 2625, info@wujoud.org, www.wujoud.org

Bethlehem (02) Al-Balad Museum for Olive Oil Production, Tel: 274 1581, Opening hours: 8:00-14:30 Monday through Saturday • Batuna al Talhami Museum, (Folklore Museum) Arab Women’s Union, Tel: 274 2589, Fax: 274 2431, Opening hours: daily from 8:00 - 13:00 • Thatta and Thursday - 17:00 except for Sundays and Thursdays • Bethlehem Peace Center Museum, Tel: 276 6677, Fax: 274 1057, info@peacenter.org, www.peacenter.org, Opening hours: daily from 10:00-18:00 except Sundays from 10:00 - 16:00 • International Nativity Museum, Telefax: 276 0076, nativitymuseum@salesianbethlehem.com, www.internationalnativitymuseum.com • Natural History Museum, Tel:02-276 2074, eec@p-tel.com, www.eccp.org • Arslat Old Village House/Museum, Mob: 0597 524 524, 0599 679 492, 0502 509 514, artaseo@hotmail.com, Opening hours: By Appointment • Palestinian Heritage Center, Telefax 274 2381, mahasaca@palestinianheritagecenter.com, www.palestinianheritagecenter.com

Gaza (08) Al Mathaf, Tel: 285 8444, info@almathaf.ps, www.almathaf.ps

Jericho (02) Russian Museum Park Complex, Mob: 0595 076 143

TRANSPORTATION

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“I hate p’s!”
We were going over some vocabulary words, and the word was pneumonia.
“You know,” I said, “you’re probably the only person in the universe who has ever said
‘I hate p’s.’”
“I hate the universe too!” she added.
“Have you ever used algebra in your life?” is the sort of question Maya asks. Naturally,
I refrain from replying, “Wait till you take calculus with differentiation and integration!”
“Why do we have to waste twelve years of our lives going to school?”
Her questions and remarks about school, in fact, never end. As for myself, being a
conformist (or a sheep, according to some) and fortunate to have had a relatively pleasant
school experience, I do my best to answer Maya’s questions and grace her with life’s
wisdom about the benefits of going to school. So far, however, her mother and I have
failed miserably!
In a selfish way, I am comforted when I hear about other parents who complain that they’re
having difficulty in motivating their children to go to school. It gives me some assurance
to see that I am not the only one who doesn’t know how to raise a kid to respect, or at
least not to question, “the system.” My hunch was right. I’m not alone in this.
At twelve, my daughter knows exactly what she wants to be when she grows up, and
she’s more than convinced that school is not helping her attain her dream. She realises
the importance of acquiring (at least some) knowledge, but essentially what she’s saying
is that school is not the right means for her to acquire that knowledge. Actually it goes
beyond that; school is even hindering her from achieving her goal in life to become
whatever she wants to be. Blasphemy!
I know this is sacrilegious to most people, particularly to those directly involved in our
educational system; but call this a challenge to those who educate our children and
possibly an eye-opener to others. In this age where access to practically any piece of
information is just a few clicks away – even for a child, the pace of life is getting faster,
and the world has literally become a global village – have our schools really kept up with
today’s technological advancement and pace? I’m not even talking about some useless
material – which we were taught 30 or 40 years ago – still being taught today. I’m talking
about a system in which intelligent young human beings feel that they’re cooped up, being
stuffed with useful and useless information, and being bullied by a system that labels
them a total failure unless they get good grades. Whether those who feel this way are
right or wrong, ask yourself this: Why do they feel this way? Is it an exception, a freak
case? Or is it a phenomenon? Is it only complacency and the result of not being brought
up the “right” way? Or is there something here worth thinking about? Maybe reading
every single article in this issue will enlighten us.
The biggest challenge is posed by the fact that the vast majority of us have only known
and experienced one way of learning. To tell someone whose entire life has been spent
being an educator that there might be something inherently wrong with the system is like
telling a believer: Oooops! Sorry, you’ve been practicing the wrong religion!
Can we discuss this further? Nationally, maybe? Should such an initiative come from the
sceptics or perhaps from a bold Ministry of Education?
“What’s the best thing about school?” I asked Maya. “Friends,” she quickly
replied. “What’s the worst thing about school?” No answer, just an odd
look with a raised eyebrow!
Participate in
The Business Women’s Forum Competition for Palestinian Female Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneur of the Year 2014

The Business Women’s Forum launches the 2014 Business Plan Competition for female entrepreneurs in Palestine. Funded by Bank of Palestine and Spark Organisation from the Netherlands, the competition aims to inject the spirit of competition among female entrepreneurs, support them to achieve their ambitions and encourage them to start or develop their own businesses.

Requirements For Participation:
- Project owner must be a Palestinian female entrepreneur.
- Participants in the competition should have a conceptual framework for starting a new project or clearly present an existing project that needs further development.
- Projects must be for profit businesses.
- Participants must commit to all stages of the competition.

What Does the Competition Program Offer?
- Intensive training on the preparation of a Business Plan.
- Consulting on project development or on starting a new project.
- Networking with potential investors.
- Networking with potential local and international customers.

How to Sign-up
- Fill in an application form at the Business Women’s Forum or at Bank of Palestine branches.
- Or you can call 02-2455612/3 for an application form or email ihassasneh@bwf.ps. Submission deadline is 30/11/2014.