THE WORLD COUNCIL OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETIES

The Contested Role of Education in Conflict and Fragility

Zehavit Gross and Lynn Davies (Eds.)

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The Contested Role of Education in Conflict and Fragility

THE WORLD COUNCIL OF COMPARATIVE EDUCATION SOCIETIES

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The Contested Role of Education in Conflict and Fragility

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INTRODUCTION

LYNN DAVIES

OVERVIEW ONE

Context and Substance of the Book

The intention of this book is to bring together new thinking and research on education's complex and evolving role in conflict and fragility. In different contexts around the world, at different levels of education, and from different theoretical lenses, education occupies a contested space. The changing nature of conflict, from inter- to intra-state, and with shifting geopolitical power balances, means the need to reconceptualize where education is positioned. Claims that education on its own can be an agent of conflict transformation are disputed. Deliberate attempts at peace education are not without critics and controversies. The aim of this collection is to generate new realism from empirical and reflective accounts in a variety of countries and political contexts, as well as provide innovative methodological approaches to the study of education and conflict.

Initiatives in peace education, peace-building, conflict resolution and social cohesion are rooted in history, but also linked to visions of the future. Studying education's role in peace and conflict is often justified by the need to help secure the future against further violations of human rights, whether based on ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. Does it accomplish those ends? At a time when many societies are more diverse than ever before, legitimate concerns about nationalism and xenophobia underscore the importance of an inquiry into whether conflict sensitivity and critical political education can function to develop mutual understanding and shared goals.

The particular distinctiveness of our volume is the emphasis on 'contested' – that it includes the debates and disagreements on the role of education in conflict, as well as material on teaching controversial issues in fragile contexts. Such concerns are not just about contexts labelled fragile states, but recognition that social cohesion can be fragile even in countries seen as stable. This is never more apparent than in the spread of ISIS and its effects on community perceptions in many countries. Education policy must be scrutinized anew: we find for example how education policy is now learning from conflict states, rather than the other way round. Methodologies of 'measuring' conflict and fragility need constant critical review, as do the theoretical frameworks which underpin quantitative and qualitative research.

Z. Gross & L. Davies (Eds.), The Contested Role of Education in Conflict and Fragility, 3–12.
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The idea for this volume came from the thematic group on Education and Conflict at the World Council of Comparative Education Congress in Buenos Aires in 2013. Many of the chapters in this collection stem from papers presented and discussed there, updated and revised after critical review. Others were specially commissioned. As well as overview comparative chapters, the collection encompasses a range of specific contexts, geographically and educationally – Algeria, Canada, El Salvador, Israel, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Tunisia, UK and US, with settings that include schools, higher education and refugee camps. Focuses range from analyses of education in historical conflicts to contemporary issues such as post Arab Spring transformations. Perennial concerns about religion, colonialism, protest, cohesion, globalization and narrative are given new slants. There are unique and original takes on a whole variety of contestations.

The structure of the book is to drill down from broad theoretical approaches, through education policy to the people involved and then the pedagogy. There are of course overlaps, and the more theoretical chapters are not dehumanized any more than the pedagogical chapters are atheoretical. But the four sections do reflect different concerns and overall starting points of the writers. Crucially for this volume, they all echo actual or potential debates.

The first section, *Debates on Theory and Methodology*, introduces three very different focal points, and three different – but complementary – demands for new thinking. Michalinos Zembylas and Zvi Bekerman ask for a rethink of the theoretical grounding of integrated education in conflicted societies. Policy on integration can rest on essentialised differentiations, and the authors argue for a new theoretical language on integrated education. After a review of shared or integrated education historically and empirically, they discuss the main theoretical traditions which have seemed to justify integration in the education sphere – social cohesion and acculturation theory, the contact hypothesis and multiculturalism. This critique, particularly of the assumption that there is something called 'group identity' or 'group culture', leads to re-theorization, using Butler's concept of vulnerability and Kristeva's analysis of interaction and proximity. Collectively, these ideas offer a different vision and practice of integration and sense of community in conflicted societies, a new point of departure, a renewed politics of recognition. In its contentious concerns that integrated education may reproduce existing structures of division, this chapter is an excellent place to kickstart debates.

Julia Paulson and Robin Shields show how the concept of fragility – which is now part of the language of conflict and education – introduces further complexity into causes, effects and interconnections between violent conflict, poor educational performance and instability. Yet the definition and measurement of concepts like fragility are notoriously difficult. The authors offer new insights, based on their very recent research which shows that conflict and fragility have clearly differing effects on education. While detailed examination of data confirms that the greater the intensity of conflict, the greater the negative effect on school enrolment, and that there is a statistically significant relationship between state fragility and educational

enrolment, a startling finding for some is that when controlling for fragility, the relationship between conflict and enrolment was no longer significant. Is fragility then a common cause of both conflict and changes in enrolment? There follows a detailed examination of current (somewhat narrow) measures of conflict and a critique of the methodological problems around of the sorts of data sets used. A similar detailed critique of shifting and ambiguous concepts and measures of fragility comes next. A key reminder is that any measurement of fragility is simultaneously a theory of how a society *should* function. However, the concept is vague and ambiguous. The authors' in-depth scrutiny of a wealth of statistical data together with examination of different indices of conflict and fragility mean this chapter is invaluable – indeed essential – for any researcher seeking to establish connections in the education-conflict-fragility nexus.

The third chapter in this first section takes yet another lens, and in fact is called 'changing the prism' – this time with the spotlight on the education in emergencies (EiE) field. Christine Monaghan explores how the discipline of International Relations (IR) offers possibilities for a critical research agenda in this field. While there have already been paradigm shifts in asking for reframing EiE in a broader discourse of security studies, Monaghan goes further in advocating IR approaches. Of the three major paradigms of IR – realism, constructivism and liberal institutionalism, Monaghan argues that constructivism offer scholars in EiE the greatest breadth of possibilities for new thinking and research. She outlines the ontological and epistemological premises of constructivism as applied to EiE, as well as locating a range of methodologies. Her preferences are historical institutionalism (interviews with elites, oral histories, archives) and frame analysis (how agents within a structure use language). The chapter concludes with a 'narrative snapshot' of curricular change in a refugee camp in Kenya, which shows how this research methodology can be productively used. This chapter is useful not just to EiE scholars but any researcher looking at education's contested role in peacebuilding.

The second section, *Debates on Policy and Politicisation* includes discussion of three different aspects of policy: the origin; the ideology; and the political economy. Brent Edwards firstly reveals how education reform in conflict-affected settings can be influenced by international organisations. Conflict states are particularly susceptible to such influences – but importantly, there are 'blind spots' where those reforms that are inscribed lack transparency and accountability. International organisations must 'sell' their policies to sustain their *raison d'etre*. Edwards chooses the example of El Salvador's EDUCO reform – education with community participation. He shows how the reform had a number of political agendas, including the wish to undermine the power of the teacher unions. The World Bank used EDUCO as an opportunity to experiment with new governance. Edwards reveals how it had in fact led to a second class system of schools being created that marginalized large proportions of the student population. Yet after ostensibly rigorous evaluation, EDUCO was also then used to influence reforms in other countries. International organisations appear

to have a short menu of preferred policies. The chapter raises disturbing questions about the reach of such organisations as well as issues of when a reform is chosen, whether during or after a conflict. Edwards gives intriguing suggestions for research on other countries during certain periods in conflict or afterwards.

Next, in line with the focus of the book on contestation, Lynn Davies looks at the contested role of religion and conflict, and at the nexus of religion, education and conflict. Research indicates that conflicts based around religion are more intractable than others. While religion can provide personal security, at the national level religion, nationalism and violence can become intertwined to threaten security. Davies develops an amplification spiral to show how the exclusivity of religion becomes superiority which becomes intolerance which becomes the notion that God is on your side and finally which becomes expansionism for God. The urgent policy proposal is therefore for secularism in governance and schooling, but this proposal needs to acknowledge and debunk myths around secularism, which Davies does – including the myth that secularism is the same as atheism. She shows how a dynamic secularism is in fact a friend to religion and supports a diversity of religious beliefs. However, religion is not to be elevated above critique. The educational implications are to avoid divisive faith-based schools where possible, but also for students to learn about religion in a critical way, in order to interrupt some of the amplification spiral. Learning about the tenets of secularism (for example rights, or the rule of law) is not so controversial, but the more contentious implications are for a critical approach to sacred texts, so that young people can challenge extremist or misogynistic passages or interpretations. Mistakes made in the name of religion also need surfacing. The overall argument is that religion cannot be immune from critical pedagogy.

Finally in this section Tejendra Pherali, through the lens of the conflict and post-conflict situation in Nepal, argues that political interference, corruption and informal governance in education are the biggest barriers to post-conflict educational reforms. Reforms that are largely issues-based and adopt purely a technical approach to programming are particularly vulnerable. Post-conflict, it is important to address the sector-wide as well as inter-sectoral issues of exclusion. Conversely, social transformation and peacebuilding needs to include education sector reforms. Pherali includes a critique of the well-known Schools as Zone of Peace (SZOP) initiative in Nepal, while recognizing its positive benefits. The core of the chapter is to use a political economy approach to analyse conflict, with a valuable grid which juxtaposes social, economic, political and security concerns against national, district and local features. Teachers are revealed as political activists, with professional disengagement and loyalty to political parties rather than the state. School governance is also politicized. Peacebuilding can be attempted through curricular reform, but dealing with sensitive issues in a politicised society is clearly complex. Education for peace should raise critical awareness of social and political conditions that fuel or mitigate conflict, in order to identify transformative approaches to achieve peace with social justice. The question becomes how to engage critically with the issues relating to unfair social and educational policies such as biased representation or

omission of diverse cultures in the curriculum, ignorance of the mother tongue in formal education, unequal access to education and unequal or no representation of diverse communities in educational policy making. Such questions clearly relate to contexts much wider than Nepal.

Section Three is called *Debates on People as Agents of Change,* and explores how and why people become active in transformation – either of situations or of themselves. Anna Virkama firstly looks at the role of intellectuals in the revolts of the Arab Spring, with a focus on three countries in transition: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. Her concern is the place of higher education (HE) and academic freedom in such countries. Is there a gulf between Arab intellectuals and the largely anonymous young people who led the protests? This chapter denies this charge by looking the interplay of actors in HE and civil society in the Maghreb. Definitions of 'academic freedom' and of 'intellectuals' are given before proposing a threefold perspective of the role of intellectuals: historical, generational and transnational, the latter particularly important in the role of diaspora intellectuals. The chapter analyses the problematic state of HE in a post-colonial context, leading to the 'culture of despair' among youth. The valuable in-depth analyses of HE in each of the three countries provide a rich resource to understand the complex motivations and networks of protesters. It is shown conclusively how all three countries had very engaged intellectual communities and how the universities have been important arenas in the battle for change in civil society. This seems not because the universities were officially spearheading academic freedom and critical pedagogy, quite the opposite: there were protests against the educational reforms imposed by the government, or to demand more employment for graduates. However, what is instructive is the different forms and new dynamics in the latest protests, for example differences in whether there are confrontations between Islamists and leftist students. The protests of the 21st century are not just social and economic demands, but also aspirations for democracy and constitutional change. New communications technology and new virtual public spaces have emerged: the participation of students as bloggers and citizen journalists offers new possibilities for student activism where freedom of speech is limited. The challenge is how to ensure enough freedom of expression on the university campus while guaranteeing the security of students and avoiding violent confrontations. This is now an issue not confined to the Mahgreb.

Zehavit Gross's chapter in contrast begins from a micro-level case study which probes how Israeli Arab and Jewish students who were studying together on a conflict resolution course coped with their competing loyalties during the Gaza war of 2008–9. The point of departure is whether and how a university course can serve as a venue for experiential learning where civic engagement and peace education is studied and practised. Gross relates an incident which led to huge tensions between the two sets of students, and where, as facilitator, she had to deal with extreme stereotypical accusations, including that all Arabs were terrorists. High emotions were aroused. As a facilitator of dialogue groups, Gross's questions were whether the encounter should focus on the group-political aspect or rather the personal psychological and

interpersonal components. The Israeli setting, where stereotypes are learned, serves as a venue for both the cultural and social situatedness of learning. Palestinian Arab Israelis can be rejected on both sides – by Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza and by Israeli Jews. The gap between the ideal of Israel as a multicultural and inclusive society and the reality on the ground makes neutral facilitation difficult. The turning point came from when everyone in the room was crying and hence the realisation that all were human beings; collectivist discourses made it impossible to hold a dialogue, but personal discourses opened it up. Gross explores how transformative mediation methodology underpins such contexts, aiming not to change the situation but the participants. The chapter finishes with a discussion of the relevance of Castells' distinction between legitimizing, resistance and project identities, and whether or how project identities around peace and reconciliation can work.

In the final chapter of this section, we return to the Mahgreb, but with a different lens: a historical one on the Algerian war of independence, and on schools rather than HE. Alexis Artaud de La Ferrière examines the action of the *Front de Liberation National* (FLN) of opposition and disruption of the French state school system for Algerian Muslims. These actions were part of a larger campaign of disruption, but made a political point by challenging the legitimacy of the schooling project as conceived by the French state. As he points out, this facet provides elements of historical precedent for more recent campaigns against state education, such as in Afghanistan or Nigeria. The chapter first explores the political motivations for French investment in educational development in Algeria, that is, as psychological warfare, then how the FLN positioned itself against these. It is intriguing how the French analysis of education at that time corresponds to neo-Marxist accounts of the governance function of state schooling. Counter-insurgency becomes about manufacturing consent. Original research in the FLN archives provides fascinating detail of FLN strategies and internal conflicts. Atrocities and violence are revealed by both sides. Troubling ethical questions are raised about justifications for violence in anti-colonial struggles, which are relevant across a wide range of historical and contemporary locations. In a broader reflection on the meaning of colonialism and colonial education, de La Ferrière concludes with an argument that colonial education remains a barrier to political emancipation in many parts of the world. Neo-colonialism by the French in South West Africa and discrimination against French citizens of African descent constitutes internal colonialisation inherited from the classical domination of France over African colonies. In such a context educational institutions have an intrinisically dialectical nature, controlling populations but also distributing cultural and intellectual resources which can be employed for emancipation. de La Ferrière graphically shows from his case study how the coloniality of a specific school system needs a fine-combed analysis.

In the final section, *Debates on Pedagogy,* four chapters on teaching and learning in conflict and post-conflict situations exemplify the current debates on how peace should be taught, if at all. We start with Candice Carter's review of attempts at guidelines and standards for peace education. Standards are now used by many

donor agencies for assessment of projects, for example INEE's well known Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies. The standardization movement across the world certainly needs examination and critique, including its neo-liberal agenda of comparisons of student achievement. Carter shows a lack of coherence, linked to different state goals for 'peace' education – whether defence or individual problem solving without violence. Standards that omit peace history will normalize violence as a means of national defence. Limitations associated with the standards for education include a lack of applied curriculum theory, a disconnection with social justice and an impediment to peace and conflict pedagogy. However, NGOs have been promoting strands of peace-oriented education in their guidelines, and Carter gives more promising examples. This chapter describes a very interesting grounded methodology to examine the constructs, theories, principles and aspects evident – or not – in peace education, mostly in USA and UK, but also in a range of other countries. It is confirmed that standards tend to prescribe the norms of the dominant culture, so that non-dominant groups have needed to create their own standards. No government has a truly visionary pedagogy. Governments may promote social and emotional competences for their individual citizens, but not for their institutions. Currently available standards for peace education represent partially conflicting goals for student preparation. Carter concludes that students deserve education that prepares them to identify the roots of structural conflicts affecting peoples' wellbeing – something missing in many current state standards.

The next three chapters in this section then provide illustrations of possibilities in specific contexts. Firstly, from his studies in Malaysia and Canada, Timothy Cashman became interested in how international policies are taught in the US curriculum, and chose a US high school on the US and Mexico border as a case study. The border wall within walking distance of the school was constructed to impede the flow of human traffic, goods, ideas, fauna and contraband form crossing to the US from Mexico. and hence represents a geopolitical border. As Cashman reveals, it is a very interesting context to ask how educators report on their discussion of US policies, and, in particular, US led wars and anti-terrorism measures. What happens in border classrooms can be considered through lenses of border pedagogy. Here, educators found that the reliance on high stakes test scores as the sole measurement of their students' knowledge acted to limit their opportunities for border pedagogy; a pedagogy of place was lacking, a pedagogy which could provide a narrative of local and regional politics that is attuned to the border region. The testing regime constituted another border wall. Students lacked chances to engage in dialogues that compared their daily realities and understandings as border region students with their transnational peers. In its juxtaposition of so many different types of border, this chapter provides a highly innovative theoretical as well as empirical take on how learning about conflict and conflict policy occurs.

In a related vein, Pauline Kollantai starts her chapter with the notions of bridging and bonding across divides, but her interest is in the use of religious story-telling in diverse communities where there is potential for the breakdown of trust and

harmony. As she elucidates, story telling has been an essential part of being human across all cultures, and she takes this further to argue that narrative thinking is the optimum form of thinking for learning and expressing what we know about ourselves and others. The story provides the framework for understanding the past, engaging in the present and envisioning the future. Stories are part of the political process of restorative justice. Yet stories are also manipulable, and can be used to compel action; Kollontai acknowledges that they can be either a constructive or destructive tool in conflict. So are there certain stories that cannot be used in peace-building? Or is it the way they are told? Kollontai embarks on a useful critique of Putnam's work on social capital, pointing out that throughout Putnam's work there continues to be a serious lack of engagement with Islam. Yet the important general message about building social networks and people committing themselves to each other remains valid. Her point of concern is the value of RE in schools in promoting social cohesion – which might form one of the many debates in this book. She paints a convincing picture of the power of stories in different religious traditions, and provides a case study of research in a primary school in a diverse ethnic setting in UK. Religious stories were seen as important for children learning about other religions and developing empathy, and specific stories were identified as particularly helpful. The research also looked at pedagogy and evaluation, with the latter revealing some of the problems of more violent stories, with children reacting by justifying revenge and retribution. Kollontai's nuanced and in-depth knowledge of how stories are framed in different sacred texts is invaluable, as is her perception about dangers of over-simplification. The introduction of her concept of 'binding' takes us forward – more than bridging and bonding, this is a deep sense of identification and sense of responsibility towards each other irrespective of religious, ethnic and racial difference.

The chapter by Grace Feuerverger concludes this section with a highly personal account of making a difference in students' lives, and portrays the 'magic' of teaching her education students in Canada. Hers is an avowedly religious and spiritual perspective, with concepts such as soul, contact with the Divine and the enchantedness of our world. But it is also political, in her work with the students on Martin Luther King, on how to make dreams realities. Her aim is to transform 'boring courses' such as Curriculum Foundations into something that will also transform students. Feuerverger's work and experience in the Jewish-Palestinian community and school *Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam* in Israel is at the heart of this narrative. Education has the power to create a 'home', through peoples' shared reflective narratives – and we see the connections to Kollantai's account of the power of narrative for 'binding' in the previous chapter. Feuerverger proposes an 'engaged pedagogy' – which involves bringing one's own confessional narrative into the classroom, and encouraging 'intense self-scrutiny'. In this vein, she opens up in class about being a child of Holocaust survivors, and what that meant growing up in Canada; this led to intense discussions on 'foreigners', on racism, bigotry and hatred. While these are nightmarish phenomena, the optimism and dreams about

social change which Feuerverger conveys provide a welcoming note to end this section.

The volume ends with a concluding analysis from Mieke Lopes Cardozo and Ritesh Shah, two of the convenors responsible for the thematic group at WCCES which generated this collection. This conclusion is able to identify four emerging arguments that reflect the changing discipline of comparative and international education. These are that history matters, interdisciplinarity matters, critical theory matters and multiscalar and contextualized analyses matter. History matters in order to prevent history repeating itself. Interdisciplinarity matters to ensure studies of education go outside the educational space, and locate phenomena in the structural conditions of society – as well as drawing on the richness of personal experience. Multiscalar analysis demands recognition of different levels of scrutiny, that is, how conflict is located in complex and highly unequal systems of local, national, regional and global actors, institutions and practices. The authors then reflect on moving the field of education and conflict forward. This is away from problem-solving approaches to those under the umbrella of critical theory, in order to question and challenge conditions perceived as hegemonic for social transformation. As they have argued in their own research, rather than presenting an evolutionary or consensual process of change, education must be acknowledged as existing within highly contested projects of state, nation and region building. Books such as these can allow us to see the many faces, not just two, that education has in relation to conflict and fragility.

Endnote

Finally, it can be mooted that of these many faces in conflict, and from the different angles from contributors, there would in fact be some convergences. In the book emerge deep exposes of different sources of manipulations of education – by nationalist governments, by international organisations, by religious authorities, by colonial powers and by warring factions in conflict – sometimes acting together in even more powerful combinations and alliances. What seem like benign initiatives in community education, integration, multiculturalism or religious tolerance can default to the status quo of inequality or divisiveness.

Because of this, a theme running through the book is the desperate need for education to be founded on a critical pedagogy which scrutinizes structural causes of poverty, violence, conflict and extremism, and one which tackles head on the question of power. As with initiatives in transitional justice, this is not an abstract examination of structures and systems, but includes identification of real players and agents in the perpetuation of conflict. One central question remains however. How many governments and authorities in conflict-affected states – or even stable states – will actually welcome and promote such a pedagogy, one that of necessity critiques government, critiques religion, and critiques education itself and the fatally uneven way it is structured? Not many. Protesters and critics who are identified in the volume

will in some ways take action in spite of their education, rather than because of it. Yet however manipulated, we see that education does provide bedrocks of literacy, social awareness and contacts – and with new communications technology, a more assertive and networked set of learners is bound to emerge. We have to hope that the current shocks of terrorism and extreme violence will generate a genuine counter-narrative – by governments as well as by educationists. And we would look forward to a second volume detailing this. Our thanks to the contributors of this one for their detailed, well–researched and perceptive insights and contestations.

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ZEHAVIT GROSS

OVERVIEW TWO

The Place of Contestation in the Discourse of Conflict Education

The objective of this section of the introduction is to describe and analyse the place of the component of contestation in the discourse of conflict education. First Judaism's approach to disagreements and contestation between different and opposing opinions is presented, which is pivotal to conflict discourse in Israel and for Jews worldwide, and can serve as a starting point for debate as to its wider relevance. The discussion then broadens out to examine several factors that accelerate the contestation component in educational discourse in conflict regions more generally. A critical analysis is performed of research studies that have explored the nature of discourse between conflict groups, and their failure to address contestation is discussed. Finally the development of a culture of contestation in educational research and practice is proposed.

CONTESTATION BETWEEN VARIOUS OPINIONS – THE CORE OF CONFLICT DISCOURSE IN JUDAISM'S APPROACH

Education is a space with room for competing voices that represent different forces and starting-points of the debate. The world of Judaism and the Talmudic corpus are based and structured on that contestation between different voices. Judaism distinguishes between two types of disagreements in contestation: between different voices defined as '*le'shem shamayim*' (for the sake of heaven), and those that are not '*le'shem shamayim*'. We read in the Mishna, Masechet Avot 5:17 '*Every argument that is for the sake of heaven's name, it is destined to endure. But if it is not for the sake of heaven's name – it is not destined to endure. What is an example of an argument for the sake of heaven's name? The argument of Hillel and Shammai. What is an example of an argument not for the sake of heaven's name? The argument of Korach and all of his followers*'. An interpreter of the Mishnah, known as Bartenura, wrote that in an argument for Heaven's sake '*the objective, and our end goal in that argument, is to arrive at the truth . . . but in an argument that is not for Heaven's sake, the goal is control over others and winning the fight'*. In other words, argument for the sake of heaven is a practical argument aimed at seeking the truth, and since it deals with truth its content will remain relevant even after the argument is concluded

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(like the disagreements of principle between the House of Shammai and the House of Hillel, that are shown below)

An argument whose background is personal reflects a struggle for power and the desire to rule, and will not remain relevant when it is concluded (like the dispute of Korach and his followers). Korach and his followers came to Moses intent on taking over the leadership in the name of equality and democracy – they argued that the whole congregation is holy, and ask why Moses and Aaron should exult themselves over everyone. Since their request for leadership was driven by material personal interest, by the desire to rule, not out of the desire to serve the people of Israel, they were swallowed up and buried deep in the earth. In Judaism's pantheon of ideas and opinions, no one remembers the components, character and nature of a disagreement with a negative, and non-constructive nature – only the bitter end of being swallowed up by the earth.

It seems then that Judaism's perception of argument is not necessarily a negative one. One finds in Judaism and the Talmud substantive disagreements between different worldviews and perceptions. Judaism sees nothing wrong in arguments; the Sages said of contesting arguments that 'both this and that are the words of the all-powerful God'. In other words, two contesting opinions possess inherent quality and can be considered holy. However it's noteworthy that Jewish law ultimately rules according to one of them only (usually in accordance with the House of Hillel which takes a more pragmatic and lenient line. According to Judaism's perception, two differing opinions does not imply that one is wrong, and the perception of *halacha* (Jewish law) stems from an overall worldview that differs from the reality. For example there is a disagreement in halacha between the House of Shamai and the House of Hillel concerning the way in which the candles should be lit during the festival of Hanukkah. Hillel says *'mosif va'holech*' – meaning adding on to the candles. On the first night you light one candle, on the second night two candles, and so on until the full number of eight candles are lit. Shamai believed that the candles should be lit according to *'pochet v'holech'*, meaning lighting fewer candles every night. On the first night you light eight candles, on the second night seven, and so on.

The Sages argued that fundamentally that disagreement is rooted in an overall worldview regarding how we deal with evil. Shamai says that all the forces of evil must be burnt by fire – 'So shalt thou put the evil away from among you' (Numbers 17: 7). Hillel says that in order to battle evil, we must add light. In this approach, it is light and more light that will bring the great light, as we can see on the final day of Hanukah when all eight lights are lit. Hillel perceives the battle with evil as a progressive process of adding goodness, and objects to the radical approach of burning evil. The two approaches express two contesting worldviews. The ruling of halacha does not attest to the other opinion being incorrect, for pragmatic reasons, the more lenient approach is chosen, not the more rigorous one, unconnected to the quality of the other approach.

Judaism views contesting opinions as typifying the society that breaches them, and allows alternative options to be accommodated. Moreover, Rabbi Kook sees contesting opinions and the basis for the contestation, as a condition for shaping real peace. He writes: ‘There are those who think wrongly that world peace will come about only through one kind of thinking, opinion, and characteristic. So, when they see scholars studying the wisdom of Torah, and thus the varieties of approaches increase thereby – they think that the variety causes disagreements, and the opposite of peace. It is truly not so. Because true peace can only come to the world by various streams – peace will grow when everyone can see everyone else’s methods, and it will become clear that there is room for each one, each according to its place, value, and theme. And in the case of matters that seem unnecessary or contradictory – once the veracity of that wisdom is revealed from all sides – it is only by bringing together all the parts and details, all the apparently different opinions, all the different streams – it is through them that the light of truth and justice will be revealed, and the Word of God, fear of God, love of God, and the light of the Truth. So it is the scholars who bring peace, not dissension, because by widening scholarship, by interpreting and generating new wisdom from different approaches, from numerous perspectives – it is they who engender peace. For as it is written: ‘All thy children shall be taught of the Lord’ (Isaiah 54: 12). Because the world will see that everyone, even those whose opinions differ, all serve the Lord.

Rabbi Kook’s approach is that genuine peace will arrive only once all rival opinions co-exist, without narrowing or minimizing other opinions. One can find an approach that explains the variety of competing approaches in halacha because of the individual’s weakness that impels him to create a biased, or unclear view of reality because of his inability to see. Different approaches are required, that examine reality from different perspectives, and also an approach explaining that differing opinions derive from the pluralistic character of Divine will. Here, the divide between the religious pluralistic approach and the democratic pluralistic secular approach can be bridged even though it is a matter of two different sources of authority.

Tova Ilan (a central figure in the introduction of religious reforms and pluralism into Judaism) explains how one can bridge between outlooks that are apparently contradictory. She maintains that ‘In the idea of modern democracy there is in fact a similar idea, that laws and civil freedoms are actually the result of compromise between opposed opinions. Although they do not always represent what seems to us just and true, at the end of that process, they create a balance. Stemming from this is the need and duty to criticize government, but also the need to understand the partial nature of the truth that we represent. There is a need for humility, for perhaps our truth is not the absolute truth. That sort of humility will lead not only to attentive listening to the opponent’s words, not only to refraining from belittling him, but also to an attempt to ponder the inherent contradictions of the matter – any matter – and to bring up proposals for solution, that deal proactively with the rejected side.

In fact, according to Ilan’s approach, both the religious and secular approach are aware that human consciousness will always be partial and limited to time and place,

and thus there is a need to apply critical approaches – and most of all humility that leads in turn to listening, and not belittling the other. Conflict education that enables the conscious introduction of contesting opinions allows the creation of true freedom and choice, creativity and innovation.

FACTORS INTENSIFYING CONTESTATION AND VIOLENCE IN THE EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE IN CONFLICT REGIONS

Conflicts and contestation principally derive from tangible conflicting interests which are perceived as momentous, such as territory, power, land, language, and independence (Salomon, 2002, p. 32). Below four main factors that intensify and accelerate violence and contestation in conflict regions are presented. Though they are interconnected, they are presented discretely so as to highlight the uniqueness of each component and its contribution to the entire perception.

1. A major factor which accelerates contestation in the educational discourse in conflict regions is the failure of multiculturalism. It implies unwillingness to accommodate the different and the other; inability to accept complexity; and failure to change and accept situations of change. Those various failures led to an 'easier' alternative solution – that of conflict – instead of the acceptance and integration which the architects of multiculturalism envisioned. Its failure encouraged competition of a negative form. Al-Haj maintains that the pivotal problem is that multiculturalism is grounded on control, instead of participation, a situation particularly notable in education systems, as described below. Multiculturalism grounded on control means that the ruling hegemonic culture allows the different cultures some expression (chiefly technical and external) of their uniqueness, contingent on their remaining loyal to the ruling hegemony's principles. When multiculturalism is grounded on participation, it implies accepting each group's right to be different, to preserve its unique culture, identity, and way of life, even though they may run counter to the ruling hegemony's outlooks. It fosters reciprocal respect by esteeming each group's national and cultural uniqueness, and crystallizes a shared citizenship by introducing each group to other groups' cultural values, and by creating a shared cycle of its common civic values, in a process of sharing power and preserving the principles of equality and justice (Al-Haj, 1998 , p. 321).
2. Another source of intensifying violence and contestation of a negative nature is deepening of the zero-sum game orientation. This approach, in which there is always a winner and a loser who are situated in a permanent contestation, reduces the motivation to create contact, collaborate, and overcome hostility. Jamal (2007) argues that among the problems in regions with a national conflict is that the national identity is considered the norm, sui generis, and 'taken-for-granted'. That essentialist approach perceives national and cultural groups as coherent groups confronting and contest with each other. It is a problematic approach

which serves as an obstacle to educate about conflict, since 'it transforms identity into a sort of shield protecting society's security. Identity becomes a kind of homogenous, permanent trait which – when challenged – causes problems and raises obstacles'. This outlook sees relationships between the parties from a thin, restricted perspective, based on total profit and loss relationships. The narrow and total perception encourages each party to become entrenched in its position, and so each one sees the other party's position as opposed to and threatening its own existence. As a result, the other's wellbeing is seen as adversely affecting one's own wellbeing. These attitudes do not happen by chance, but are methodically and cleverly structured by education and socialization, and they constitute the material that ignites and feeds the flames. No contact is possible in that reality, and sometimes contacts are intentionally prohibited – for if the parties had some sort of option to meet and come into any kind of contact, even superficial, it might moderate the tension and anxiety to some degree.

3. Another source of intensifying violence and negative contestation is power relationships – Al Haj (1998) maintains that the chief reason for conflicts are the social and economic divides between the majority group and the minority, and remarks that 'when the majority oppresses and denies the minority's identity and historical narrative, it is a major factor in boosting the potential for conflict and deepening the divides'. The schooling system and the school curriculum tend to reflect the power system and the dominant culture prevailing in wider society, and particularly the asymmetrical majority-minority relationships within it. Gamal contends that in a system of controllers-controlled, the stronger side tends to preserve the status quo while the controlled try to undermine it. 'The struggle over the status quo becomes a mechanism that feeds the dichotomy between the two sides which consider themselves homogenous' (Al-Haj, p. 12). Michael Apple (2002) believes that the curriculum reflects the controlling hegemony's ideology, and to some extent reinforces the negative stereotypes attributed to the minority groups. The school system does not enable "positive" contestation. Instead of being a catalyst for social change, the schooling system is a mechanism that operates to conserve the status quo; accordingly, events that occur after inner or external conflicts only intensify the embarrassment and helplessness that characterise the education system in conflict regions.
4. Another source of intensifying violence and negative contestation is silencing the religious aspect of the conflict. This is dominant in the Israeli-Arab conflict. Peace discourse frequently has a liberal secular nature that disregards the religious aspect of the conflict. Denial of a conflict's religious aspect competes with the perception and simplistic engagement with the religious aspect as a necessary evil, and less valuable, in the name of enlightened liberalism's view that religion is a primitive necessary evil. This renders the debate shallow and does not enable positive contestation. Two principal discourse patterns that relate to the Israeli-Arab conflict can be discerned in the research literature (Gross & Gamal, 2014): one that we term "coexistence discourse," and the other which

we define as “religious struggle discourse.” Coexistence discourse is primarily secular and engages with the Palestinian people’s legitimate right to a sovereign state. Proponents of this right present civil arguments that draw on liberal-secular concepts. In contrast, religious struggle discourse has a religious nature. The two types of discourse clearly reflect totally different worldviews: the discourse of coexistence, used by Arabs and Jews alike, positions the state of Israel as a secular state that should relate to its citizens regardless of their religion or ethnic affiliation, and is perceived as possessing power and withholding the rights and the coexistence discourse from the Palestinian people. In contrast, from the Jewish perspective, the discourse of religious struggle views Islam and the pan-Arab culture as controlling much of the Middle East and preventing peace with the Jewish people. From the Islamic viewpoint, the discourse of religious struggle views the Jews as infidels, whose presence in the land of Israel directly harms Islam. According to Islam, there are two conditions under which a nation can exist: *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-harb*. The first situation, in which a nation is ruled by Islam and governed by its laws, is considered most desirable. The second condition is problematic in terms of Islam – it relates to countries that are not subordinate to the dictates of Islam. These nations’ fate is, as their definition suggests, *harb* – destruction in Arabic. There is a distorted view that claims that the goal of Islam is to attain a situation in which the world is *Dar al-Islam*. The means to be applied may be peaceful, claims this view, but the Koran says that when this cannot be achieved, then a holy war – *jihad* – must be launched to impose Islam (Lewis, 1998: 121–122). Ignoring the religious aspect of the conflict within the educational discourse (see Gross & Gamal, 2014) and concentrating only on its secular liberal aspect does not allow a full comprehension of its foundations, does not fully respect the religious participants who are deeply involved in it and does not allow a true management of the peace discourse (see also Abu-Asba, Jayusi, & Sabar-Ben Yehoshua, 2011).

THE NATURE AND CHARACTER OF THE EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE BETWEEN CONFLICT GROUPS

Research into encounters of conflict groups in secondary and higher education has accumulated substantial knowledge on the importance of contact, and the effectiveness of contact between conflict groups; on stages in the development of discourse between the groups; and on the distinction between the character and nature of the discourse (collective or individual).

1. The encounter between conflict groups from the perspective of contact theory

Allport’s intergroup contact theory (1954) was one of the theories that created a turn in the field of research into intergroup encounters. It maintains that contact between