Fragmented foundations: education and chronic crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

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by Susan Nicolai

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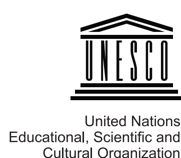

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Foreword to the series

UNESCO is increasingly requested to provide an educational response in emergency and reconstruction settings. The organization is in the process of developing expertise in this field in order to be able to provide prompt and relevant assistance. It will offer guidance, practical tools and specific training for education policy-makers, officials and planners.

The fifth of the eleven objectives adopted by the Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 explicitly focuses on the rights of children in emergencies. It stresses the importance of meeting "the needs of education systems affected by conflict, natural calamities and instability and conduct[ing] educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and that help to prevent violence and conflict". The *Dakar Framework for Action* (World Education Forum, 2000: 9) calls for national Education for All plans to include provision for education in emergency situations. Governments, particularly education ministries, have an important role to play in an area that has often been dominated by the actions of NGOs and United Nations agencies.

Moreover, the field of educational planning in emergencies and reconstruction is still young. It must be organized into a manageable discipline, through further documentation and analysis, while training programmes are being designed. Accumulated institutional memories and knowledge in governments, agencies and NGOs on education in emergencies are in danger of being lost due both to the dispersion and disappearance of documents, and to high staff turnover in both national and international contexts. Most of the expertise is still in the heads of practitioners and needs to be collected, since memories fade fast. Diverse experiences of educational reconstruction must be more thoroughly documented and analyzed before they disappear.

This task includes the publication in this series of country-specific analyses being conducted on the planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction. They concern the efforts currently being made to restore and transform education systems in countries and territories as diverse as Burundi, Kosovo, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Rwanda, Sudan and Timor-Leste. They have been initiated and sponsored by IIEP, in close collaboration with colleagues in other UNESCO offices.

The objectives of the case studies are:

- to contribute to the process of developing knowledge in the discipline of education in emergencies and reconstruction;
- to provide focused input for IIEP training programmes targeting government officials and others in education in emergencies and reconstruction;
- to identify and collect documentation on the management of education in various countries; and to capture some of the undocumented memories of practitioners;
- to analyze responses in very different situations to educational provision in times of crisis; and
- to increase dissemination of information and analysis on education in emergencies and reconstruction.

IIEP's larger programme on education in emergencies and reconstruction involves not only these case studies, but also a series of global, thematic, policy-related studies. In addition, IIEP has published a *Guidebook for planning education in emergencies and reconstruction* for ministry of education officials and the agencies assisting them, and is developing training materials for a similar audience. Through this programme, IIEP will make a modest but significant contribution to the discipline of education in emergencies and reconstruction. Its hope is to enrich the quality of the planning processes applied in this crucial field.

Mark Bray
Director, IIEP

Save the Children preface

Save the Children is the leading charity in the United Kingdom (UK) working to create a better world for children. We work in over 50 countries, including the UK, and in many of the most difficult and challenging environments in the world.

A key priority is ensuring access to quality education for the most marginalized children. More than half of the 100 million children out of school across the world are living in countries affected by conflict.

Children living through conflict face death, injury, trauma and exploitation. Even when conflict has ended, children's futures are damaged because of the learning time they have lost. It can take years for an education system to recover from war, during which time an entire generation will have lost out on an education and its benefits.

Going to school can increase a child's chances of surviving conflict. Schools can equip children with the knowledge and skills they need to stay safe and healthy, and to survive conflict and its aftermath. Schools are vital in protecting children and supporting their emotional and social development by giving them comfort, security and opportunity. The routine of school develops a sense of normalcy and the school environment is one in which children are allowed to be children, not forced to behave like adults.

For societies affected by conflict, education is integral to building long-term peace and prosperity. The legacy of properly-resourced schools with well-trained teachers and appropriate curricula is a generation of young people with the knowledge and skills for employment, and with an understanding of conflict resolution and human rights.

In 2006, the Save the Children Alliance launched a global campaign – Rewrite the Future – to improve education opportunities for children affected by armed conflict. We are working to ensure that 8 million children worldwide benefit from an education system that offers them protection, stability and opportunities in their life. In doing so, we hope to create an impetus that will enable millions more to get the same chance.

In the Middle East and North Africa region, Save the Children UK supports organizations in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Syria. The programme supports work

at the local, national and regional levels to ensure that children have the opportunity to get a good quality education. In Iraq, the Occupied Palestinian Territory, and for refugees across the region, we work to make schools more protective, both from the violence within schools and from violence that surrounds schools.

Save the Children UK has supported this publication because we hope that, based on the experiences of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, others can learn to effectively support education systems, no matter what the circumstances.

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Glossary and abbreviations

AEC	Assessment and Evaluation Centre
AIDA	Association of International Development Agencies
Awqaf	'To preserve', can mean 'charitable endowment' or 'trust fund'. In this context, the East Jerusalem governmental education system under Jordanian Awqaf Administration
DCI	Defence for Children International
EAP	Emergency Assistance Programme
EC	European Community
ECRC	Early Childhood Resource Centre
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESWG	Education Sector Working Group
EU	European Union
IIEP	UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning
Intifada	'Uprising', used to describe Palestinian struggle against continued Israeli occupation during 1987-1992 and from 2000 to the present day
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists and Law in the Service of Man
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IHL	International Humanitarian Law
Kuttub	Islamic village schools under the Ottomans
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education 1994-1996; 2002-present, also used for the separate Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education 1996-2002
MoPIC	Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, refers to the Ministry of Planning under its varying designations 1994 – 2005
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
Muqata'ah	Presidential compound in Ramallah
NAT	National Achievement Test
NETI	National Education and Training Institute

NIS	New Israeli Shekel
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPA	National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PECDAR	Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PNGO	Palestinian NGO Network
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Tawjihi	General Secondary School Certificate (GSSC)
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
UNSCO	Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories
USA	United States of America

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Source: https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/we.html

Gaza Strip

Source: https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/gz.html

Executive summary

This book examines the emergence, development and management of the education system in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) between 1994 and 2005. The study draws lessons from the Palestinian context of occupation and chronic conflict, both for the benefit of educational planners in the OPT and in order to support others working in similar contexts. It focuses on the issues to be tackled in emergency and reconstruction situations, as well as in chronic conflict. These include:

- development of ministry administration;
- budget allocation;
- donor co-ordination and support;
- ensuring access and inclusion;
- school construction;
- curriculum and textbook development; and
- teacher recruitment and development.

In 1994, the Oslo Accords led to the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA), which assumed control of administration and services in many areas of Palestinian life, including education. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was established under the PA that same year. This ministry is the formal authority responsible for the education system and established mechanisms for planning, budgeting and co-ordination, as well as for harmonizing education between the West Bank and Gaza.

A five-year educational plan was developed by the MoEHE in 2000 and, in early 2002, the Ministry began to develop an Education for All (EFA) Plan. The Five-Year Plan remains the guiding instrument for development of the Palestinian education sector.

The issues of access and inclusion are key to this publication. We see how, after 1994, enrolment in all schools substantially increased and school construction and rehabilitation became a priority. The MoEHE also made efforts towards greater inclusiveness in schools – particularly for girls and children with disabilities. Early childhood education programmes, as well as technical and vocational education and training (TVET), were also addressed by the Ministry.

Curriculum development was a particular challenge for the MoEHE, as it was the first opportunity to develop a Palestinian curriculum after

a long history of domination by foreign influence. The Jordanian and Egyptian curricula continued to be used until the Palestinian curriculum was phased in between 2000 and 2006. A formal centre for curriculum development was established in 1995 to develop learning materials reflecting the Palestinian context. Pedagogically, there continues to be an emphasis on preparation for assessment, culminating in the final year Tawjihi exam.

In 1998, efforts moved to textbook production and a large number of textbooks were prepared. Allegations were made outside the OPT that Palestinian textbooks were inciting hatred against Israel. This had a serious impact on donor support for curriculum development and textbook production. One of the findings of this study is that these allegations were not founded in substance.

As in all education systems, teachers have been the driving force in maintaining the day-to-day running of schools. However, since the PA came into power, teacher training has been relatively piecemeal, with no concrete standards or co-ordination mechanism for higher education institutions engaged in teacher training. In addition, a number of teacher strikes have led to difficult relations with the ministry.

The outset of the second Palestinian uprising, or *intifada*, in 2000, led to Israel's renewed occupation of the OPT. This has had serious consequences for the education sector. Leading up to 2000, the PA had reason to be proud of its progress in the education sector. However, the Israeli response to the *intifada* led to immeasurable costs to the entire education system – both human and structural. Much of the positive momentum was lost, and educational access and quality were affected. The study documents and examines these impacts and the response of Palestinian pupils, teachers, communities, the MoEHE and other institutions.

Given that a genuinely Palestinian education system only began to develop in 1994, considerable progress was made in a relatively short time. The education system in the OPT emerged against a backdrop of chronic crisis. However, while the occupation continues, planners of the Palestinian education system will need to adapt classic planning and management techniques to a situation of endemic instability and occasional violence. The OPT example may help to support others in crisis or conflict to provide quality education to children, as many of these lessons are applicable to other situations of ongoing crisis or repeated emergency.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Life in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) constantly falls under the spotlight of international attention, part of a political context that polarizes not only domestic society, but also other societies and governments. Almost every day, major media networks carry the story of the conflict around the world. Like all facets of life, the education sector is not immune to this scrutiny. Palestinian education has sometimes been construed as unbalanced, anti-Semitic or pro-terrorist. Yet progress made in the last decade toward developing a largely secular and modern Palestinian education system would not have been possible without strong domestic leadership and external attention and support.

The Palestinian education system has emerged through the midst of ongoing crisis and repeated emergency. When a fledgling Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) was first established in 1994, it took over a neglected and dilapidated system. Over the next five years, as the Ministry struggled to establish basic mechanisms for planning, budgeting and co-ordination, it coped with student growth and a crisis in access. But then, in 2000, just as focus was beginning to shift to improving quality by creating a new curriculum and improving teaching, a new emergency hit in the form of the second *intifada*.

As the occupation grew in intensity, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict returned to centre stage and education has again become politicized. Allegations that Palestinian textbooks incite hatred have been discussed in foreign parliaments. Palestinian school days lost due to closure, and students' lives lost due to incursions, are reported across the global media. Internal Palestinian political divisions, corruption and incompetence play their own part in holding back educational progress.

Throughout 50 years of dispossession and more than 35 years of occupation, Palestinians have repeatedly turned to education as a primary means of survival – both as individuals and as a people. There has been dramatic shift in educational access and attainment among Palestinians over this time. In 1948, only 25 per cent of children were enrolled. Today, enrolment is near 90 per cent at primary level, although this drops to nearly 50 per cent at secondary (MoPIC, 2005*a*). In terms

of higher education, the Palestinian population remains ahead of the ever-improving regional norm, in spite of ongoing political and economic instability (UNDP, 2003).

The importance of education pervades Palestinian consciousness. Salah Al Zaroo and Gillian Lewando Hunt (2003) have recorded some poignant statements. When asked to cite the most important thing in their lives, quite typically young girls replied "school, finishing my education and graduation". Similarly, an elder from the Al Aroub refugee camp boasted: "My accomplishments? I educated my children". A principal from Jenin explained this emphasis on education as due to a need to maintain Palestinian identity, investment in human resources in place of land, and a hope that education can be used in a positive way to fight the occupation.

Yet an education system is also a product of its environment, and not only of the commitment of its people. Palestinians have lived for decades under military occupation, suffered severe restrictions of movement and faced internal divisions. Today, they watch a 703 kilometre wall being built through and around their homes. Ever since the Palestinian education system was founded in 1994, coping with the occupation has been a necessary fact of life for administrators, teachers and students. The mere creation of an education system in such fragmented circumstances is remarkable.

Waiting on peace

The Arab-Israeli conflict is longstanding. Post-World War II politics led to the creation of Israel on much of the Palestinian territory previously under the British Mandate. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war resulted in the flight of some 750,000 Palestinians from their homes, creating the most enduring refugee crisis in modern history (UNHCR, 2000). Following the 1967 war with Arab states, Israel annexed East Jerusalem and occupied the West Bank (controlled at that time by Jordan) and Gaza (under Egyptian administration), thus creating what is now called the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT).

Palestinians themselves have twice – in 1948 and 1988 – declared an independent state (Jamal, 2005). But words are not necessarily enough. The late 1980s saw mass protest against occupation by Palestinians living in the OPT. This first *intifada* – meaning 'uprising' in Arabic – was a major factor leading to the Oslo peace process and creation in 1994 of

the Palestinian Authority (PA). With some governance responsibilities over both the West Bank and Gaza, this is the closest Palestinians have ever been to having their own state. However, the tendency to portray the PA's autonomy as sovereignty often obscures the extent of Israeli control that continues to affect nearly all aspects of Palestinian life.

Most of those involved in the conflict – including foreign powers – have agreed that the establishment of a Palestinian state alongside Israel is a central part of any solution. This is the basic premise of the Oslo Accords that led to the creation of the PA and was hoped to lead to a Palestinian state by 1999. When this process stalled, a second mass Palestinian protest began in September 2000. Almost two years later, United States (US) President George W. Bush reiterated a commitment to a two state solution and proposed a new mechanism, the so-called 'roadmap' for peace. Introduced in 2003 by a 'Quartet' made up of the European Union (EU), United Nations (UN), USA and Russia, confidence-building measures on each side were meant to lead to a final peace accord within three years. Several years down that road, peace is still elusive.

As outlined by Wasserstein (2004), four major issues continue to block Israeli-Palestinian progress toward peace:

(1) Borders: While the contours of a future Palestinian state based in the West Bank and Gaza are generally known, differences remain on the specifics and nature of the border, although international law and various Security Council resolutions on the subject are clear. In 2000, a land swap was proposed during the Camp David peace talks, but no agreement was reached before talks were broken off. The nature of the border itself remains contentious, with the separation wall planned to stretch 703 kilometres, effectively along an Israeli, unilaterally determined, West Bank border (Lein and Cohen-Lifshitz, 2005). Israeli security forces control all movement across the border, within the West Bank, between the West Bank and Gaza, and Gazan trade routes, with major economic impact for Palestinians.

(2) Settlements: Following the war of 1967, Israel began developing Jewish settlements, or colonies, in the OPT. Settler motivation ranges from economic to nationalist or religious. At first, construction was largely confined to East Jerusalem, in its disputed annexation to Israel. In the 1970s, the pace of settlement quickened and shifted to

include the West Bank and Gaza. Between the 1993 Oslo Accords and the outbreak of the second *intifada* in 2000, settler populations had risen from 247,000 to 375,000 (Lein, 2002). Following the Israeli pullout of some 8,000 Gaza settlers in July 2005, several hundred thousand remained in settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

(3) Right of return: In 1948, some 750,000 Palestinians fled their homes in what subsequently became Israel. Today more than 4 million Palestinian refugees are registered worldwide and, of these, 1.6 million live in camps in the OPT (UNRWA, 2005). Palestinian leaders continue to claim the right of return, as reinforced by UN General Assembly Resolution 194. Israelis, however, believe that right of return would fundamentally threaten the Jewish nature of their state.

(4) Jerusalem: Although the city is seen as the rightful capital of both Israel and a future Palestinian state, the Israeli annexation of the eastern part of the city has been declared illegal under international law and Israeli control remains unrecognized by the UN. Prior to 1967, the largely Arab neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem fell within Jordanian jurisdiction, and were then illegally annexed by Israel. While the PA does not have formal jurisdiction in the city, it has achieved unofficial oversight of Palestinian institutions there, including schools.

Negotiating positions on each of these four issues have progressed over time, and were closest to resolution in 2000 at Camp David and the subsequent talks. Since late 2000, the second *intifada*, intensified Israeli military violence and Palestinian counter-attacks increasingly entrenched positions for both actors. According to the Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, from the start of the second *intifada* in 2000, until 2005, some 892 Israelis were killed and 5,973 were wounded. Their figures show that, during this same time, 2,546 from among the Palestinian population were killed and a further 23,930 injured (Palestinian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, cited in Lochery, 2005). B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, gives slightly higher numbers of fatalities from the beginning of the *intifada* in 2000 until the end of December 2004, showing that there were 3,189 Palestinians and 940 Israelis killed (B'Tselem, 2004).

High poverty rates now put financial constraints on both individual families and the education system. Just under half of all Palestinians live

below the official poverty line of 2.30 US dollars (US$) per capita per day. Sixteen per cent live below a subsistence level of US$1.60 per day, unable to afford enough food, clothes or shelter to survive (World Bank, 2004). Prior to the second *intifada*, child poverty had been decreasing throughout the territory. Since then, however, it has increased from 26 per cent to 42 per cent (Musleh and Taylor, 2005).

Focus of the study

While the Oslo Accords did not produce a Palestinian state, they did produce the PA, which acts like a government for the purpose of administration and services in many areas of Palestinian life. The study focuses on the management of education in the OPT from 1994 to the end of 2005. The period in question saw the emergence and operation of a new ministry. The MoEHE progressively developed functions of educational planning and management, including the elaboration of a five-year educational plan for the first time in the Palestinian experience. The second *intifada* brought a new emergency, with which education actors have struggled to cope.

Timeframe

As the study spans an eleven-year period, it attempts to focus on areas of special importance in emergency and reconstruction contexts. Several distinct periods are important in this overview. The first two are touched on briefly for their historical impact on the current system, and the last two, from 1994 to the present day, are addressed in depth.

1949-1967: During this time, the West Bank was administered by Jordan and fell under the Jordanian system of education. Gaza was administered by Egypt, with the Egyptian system of education in place. Both systems paid little attention to Palestinian identity and, for the most part, Palestinians in these areas were educated in the same way as Jordanians or Egyptians.

1967-1994: After the 1967 war, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Under military administration, the curriculum content remained almost identical to that of Jordan and Egypt. However, the government of Israel paid teachers' salaries and managed the education system. Little funding was forthcoming and, in general, the quality of education declined due to neglect. This period included several conflicts and peace agreements between Israel and its neighbours, as well as the first *intifada*.

1994-2000: The signing of the Oslo peace agreement led to the formation and transfer of powers to the PA – essentially the government for what was hoped would become an independent Palestinian state. In 1994, Israel transferred authority for the education sector to the new Ministry. This was the first time Palestinians were given responsibility for their own system of education. There was considerable donor aid available, but the uncertainties of the Oslo process in reaching final status negotiations and shaping the Palestinian state meant that many educational decisions were left pending.

2000-present: By the time the second Palestinian uprising, or *Al-Aqsa intifada* began, much progress in the education sector had already been made. There were challenges to education between 1994-2000, including the difficulty of travel between the West Bank and Gaza. However, during the second *intifada*, closures, curfews, permits, demolitions and the new separation wall made co-ordination and development of the education sector nearly impossible.

Education provision

The formal authority responsible for the education system as a whole is the MoEHE, which administers nearly three quarters of schools in the OPT. This study focuses on its leadership in provision of basic and secondary education, touching briefly on early childhood education and technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Tertiary education will not be explored, other than to discuss pre-service teacher training.

In the OPT, a compulsory basic education cycle is 10 years, followed by two non-compulsory years of secondary education that end with the *Tawjihi* general examination. Schools at both primary and secondary level are generally single sex, although there have been increasing moves by the MoEHE to open co-educational facilities. Schools in major cities make up 38 per cent of the total, with 51 per cent located in villages and 11 per cent in camps (MoEHE, 2004*a*). The Ministry provides a supervisory role in early childhood education and the development of TVET is also their responsibility.

In 1994, when the MoEHE was first established, it catered for the whole education sector from pre-primary to higher education. In 1996, the MoEHE was divided for political reasons into two separate ministries: the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. In 2002, these two ministries were merged again to become the MoEHE. To avoid

confusion, in this study the MoEHE abbreviation is used to designate the education ministry of the PA, irrespective of the various name changes over time.

While focus is on the MoEHE, and the education system it manages, operation of schools in the OPT does fall under a number of other supervising authorities. This includes the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and a range of private providers. The MoEHE runs 76 per cent of all schools and educates 67 per cent of all school children; UNRWA administers 13 per cent of schools and teaches 24 per cent of the students. The private sector administers 11 per cent of schools and reaches 6 per cent of students (World Bank, 2006).

Table 1.1 Palestinian education statistics by provider (2004-2005)

Authority	Schools	Students	Teachers	Classes
Government	1,659	733,735	33,398	21,292
UNRWA	273	254,582	8,075	5,960
Private	258	62,010	4,945	2,592
Total	**2,190**	**1,050,327**	**46,417**	**29,844**

Source: MoEHE, 2004*b*.

The scope of this case study does not include education for Palestinian refugees provided by UNRWA, as these schools are a story in and of themselves. The early years of UNRWA provide possibly some of the first examples of structured emergency education efforts, when the Red Cross and American Friends set up schools in the West Bank and Gaza, respectively. Pictures of tent schools, which were part of these efforts, date as far back as the late 1940s. Schools run by UNRWA offer grades 1-10, but do not provide secondary education. The agency has served populations in Jordan Lebanon, the OPT and Syria since 1950. Over the years, UNRWA's education provision has played a major role in Palestinian educational gains (UNRWA, 2005).

Private education is also not covered by the study, partly as at the basic and secondary education level it makes up only 6 per cent of students in grades 1-12. Private providers supply nearly all the early childhood education and most tertiary education, a total of 11 universities and numerous technical and community colleges in the OPT.

Finally, the study will not cover education in East Jerusalem, in which the Jordanian *Awqaf* administration, pre-dating 1967, plays a

major role. While the MoEHE considers East Jerusalem as essentially another of its districts and supports a number of schools there, *de facto* authority continues to reside with the Israelis.

Organization and methodology

This study attempts to understand and look at the lessons that can be drawn from the Palestinian education context in the OPT, in order to support other newly-forming systems. Moreover, it considers lessons that may support others caught in chronic conflict as they attempt to continue providing some level of quality education to children.

Chapter overview

The *introduction* in *Chapter 1* highlights attention given to the education system in the OPT, both on the global political stage and by Palestinians themselves. It frames the periods of educational development being explored, with an emphasis on creation of a new system from 1994 and subsequent deterioration caused by various shocks since 2000. It then explains the focus of the study and research methodology used in its development.

Chapter 2 covers educational *inheritance* prior to the creation of the PA. It briefly discusses education under Ottoman rule, the British Mandate and Jordanian and Egyptian administrations, which saw the creation and expansion of a formal system. Education under Israeli administration is reviewed from 1967 through the first *intifada*, with a look at Israeli control of the system and the central role education played in the nationalist struggle. The importance of the Council for Higher Education and role of civil society during the first *intifada* are addressed. The chapter concludes by outlining the handover process resulting from the Oslo Accords.

Chapter 3 describes the *growing pains* of setting up a new education system in the territory; the first time Palestinians themselves were in charge. It reviews issues of start up and staffing. The separate geographies of West Bank and the Gaza Strip, along with decentralization issues, are discussed. Finally, tensions between the new Ministry and civil society – particularly NGOs – are explored.

In *Chapter 4*, *an emerging system* is outlined. An overview of educational planning is provided, describing the creation of the Five-Year Plan for 2001-2005. A discussion of budget allocation highlights the challenge in balancing salaries with investments, as well as school

budgets and their link to school fees. The importance of donor support and co-ordination in underpinning the system concludes the chapter.

The urgency of increasing *access and inclusion* is explored in *Chapter 5*. At the dawn of the PA, school facilities were inadequate to serve the number of children enrolled. With high population growth, the challenges would only grow worse; thus a large – and broadly successful – effort toward school construction was undertaken. However, the study points out that efforts to reach the most marginalized children through inclusive education have been somewhat limited. In addition, early childhood education has been largely left to civil society and the private sector, and TVET has suffered from the overly academic orientation of both the education system and society.

In *Chapter 6*, efforts to create *a new curriculum* are explored. The development of a new curriculum is one of the most visible changes in the education system – and is widely lauded among the Palestinian community, while at the same time being highly controversial among intellectual and political leadership both at home and abroad. A short discussion of student assessment, in particular the role of the *Tawjihi* exam, concludes the chapter.

Chapter 7 addresses *teacher development*. The importance of teacher recruitment, training and compensation are emphasized, with both in-service and pre-service teacher training being explored in depth.

Chapter 8 covers an *occupation renewed* since the beginning of the *Al-Aqsa intifada* in 2000. It outlines the violent impact that checkpoints, closures, curfews and the separation wall have had on the education system and children's well-being. A discussion of the steps taken to maintain the system follows, including the role of the MoEHE, schools and civil society actors. The chapter ends with a look at school-based violence and highlights the limited attention given to this issue to date.

The *conclusion* takes stock of progress achieved in the education sector over the past decade. It concludes, as other studies have done, that fulfilling Palestinian children's educational and other rights in the future is most dependent on an end to the occupation. An overview of lessons learnt throughout the document is once again provided.

Research methodology

The author was on mission to the OPT for two weeks in February to March 2005, and then again for several weeks in May that same year.

During this period, she worked closely with a number of individuals in conducting background research and interviews. Research assistants both in and out of the OPT provided support on interviews and literature review. During the time spent in the territory, administrative and logistical support was provided by the MoEHE's Department of International Relations and Public Affairs, along with the Save the Children UK office.

There have been several means of collecting stories and data for this study. The bulk of the information is drawn from over 40 different interviews with key informants conducted between February and May 2005, including staff of the MoEHE, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other education stakeholders primarily based in Ramallah and Jerusalem. To achieve a wider perspective, visits were also made to Jenin, Hebron and the Gaza Strip by the author and research consultant to conduct focus groups and field interviews at schools.

In addition, a thorough review of primary and secondary reports and studies was conducted. This included both publicly available documents, as well as grey literature sourced through interviews and by contacting organizations. There has already been much written regarding education in the OPT and it was important to draw on this research, which is detailed in the list of references.

During the course of research and writing, attempts were made to maintain objectivity in regards to the ongoing conflict. However, as the study focused on the Palestinian education system, the majority of those interviewed were Palestinian themselves or foreigners who had worked on education in the OPT.

Moreover, the context in the OPT is in constant flux, meaning that opinions and information gathered from both interviews and references represent only a snapshot – one perspective at one point in time. As this study spans 11 years, with the major focus on start-up of a new system and coping with ongoing conflict, certain perspectives may have been missed. Likewise, while at times it mentions specific agencies and projects, it is inevitable that some significant educational work will have been overlooked.

Finally, the conclusions and recommendations of this study are based on the author's analysis of available information. While they have been informed by the sponsoring organizations, opinions and any errors of fact are the author's own responsibility.

Chapter 2

Inheritance

Foreigners administered the Palestinian education system from the days of the Ottoman Empire, when formal schooling first emerged, until the PA was established in 1994. When the territory was under the British Mandate following World War I, the emphasis was on education expansion to supply a need for civil servants. Following the 1948 war, which led to the creation of Israel, Jordan administered the West Bank and its education system, while Gaza was administered by Egypt. After the Israelis took control of the territories in 1967, the Jordanian and Egyptian education systems continued even as actual control fell to the occupiers.

The Ottomans, British, Jordanian and Egyptians were successful in establishing the concept of schooling as central to Palestinian life over that century. However, each regime varied in their agenda for the education system. Professor Ali Jarbawi, a prominent Palestinian political scientist, explained in an interview:

> "Education has always been used as a political tool here. During the Mandate period, British used formal education to produce an elite. Under the Jordanians and Egyptians, the Palestinian community was only rarely considered, while education focused on nationalist causes. And with the Israeli occupation from '67, the curriculum was censored; historic references to our land – even back to the time of the Crusades – were all changed to say Israel."

It is not uncommon to see education simultaneously used as a tool by repressive regimes and a medium for protest by the oppressed. Within the OPT over the years of the various occupations, those in power have focused on maintaining the status quo, while Palestinians have used education to "promote social change and to liberate themselves and their land" (Al Zaroo and Hunt, 2003: 169). Despite outside agendas, Palestinians have seized the opportunities education offered and today are among the most educated people in the region.

Education pre-1967

A formal education system first emerged during the late 1800s as the territory lay under Ottoman rule. Created as part of an attempted

imposition of Turkish culture, there were also a number of private Jewish, Christian and Muslim schools alongside Ottoman public schools. Many villages operated *kuttub* schools, which were religion-based and focused on teaching basic literacy and the Koran. In 1896 and 1913, education laws were enacted making education compulsory for 12 years (Assaf, 1997). However, this law was far more fiction than reality, with estimates of enrolment at just over 10 per cent of the school-age population. Just before the start of the British Mandate, 98 public schools were in place, of which only three were secondary schools (Brown, 2003).

The British

In 1922, in the aftermath of World War I and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire, the League of Nations awarded Britain the mandate to govern historic Palestine. As a backdrop to their governance, several years earlier the British produced what is sometimes seen as a source of the future conflict. The Balfour Declaration, published on 2 November 1917, supported a Jewish homeland as long as it would not affect the rights of the existing Palestinian population. Thus, tensions grew between Arab residents and the increasing number of Jewish immigrants throughout the Mandate period.

Over the quarter century under the British Mandate, the education system expanded access by setting up new schools, as well as gradually absorbing the village *kuttub* schools. Private Christian, Muslim and Jewish schools were allowed to continue in parallel to those set up by mandate authorities. The British treated the system as a way to inculcate "the skills, knowledge and beliefs necessary to the functioning of the government and economic system of the Mandate" (Al Zaroo and Hunt, 2003: 168).

Palestinians, however, began to see education as a means for social advancement. By the end of the British Mandate in 1948, most cities and many villages had their own public schools. Education enrolments tripled between 1933 and 1946, rising from 6,986 to 21,468 students. However, demand for places outweighed availability; acceptance rates in city schools averaged only 50 per cent (Sfeir and Bertoni, 2003).

There was little transformation of education under the British Mandate beyond the replacement of Turkish with Arabic as the medium of instruction. Several trends, however, have continued. First, new schools were set up, so that by the end of the mandate, more than one quarter of children were enrolled; next, secondary education was

expanded, mainly to produce teachers to staff the primary schools; and, finally, these improvements were accomplished with a shrinking share of the state budget. The end of the mandate in 1947 left a legacy of expansion, centralization, limited resources, and an imported curriculum. According to Nathan Brown, “none of these features [then] changed in the subsequent half a century” (2003: 197).

Jordan and Egypt

Following Britain’s decision in 1947 to terminate its mandate and the rejection by Arab residents of a UN partition plan of the territories and surrounding states, on 14 May 1948 Jewish leaders themselves declared the state of Israel. Arab states responded militarily, clashing with the newly-formed Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). As the territory fell into war, more than 750,000 Arab Palestinians fled their homes to take refuge in surrounding countries. An armistice was declared in 1949. Much, but not all, of the territory under British Mandate fell to Israeli rule, with the state of Jordan absorbing the West Bank of the Jordan River up to East Jerusalem, and Egypt occupying Gaza.

During this period, schools in the West Bank were fully absorbed by the Jordanian education system, while schools in Gaza theoretically had some autonomy but switched to the Egyptian curriculum. In both West Bank and Gaza, education was free of charge and composed of an elementary cycle covering grades 1-6, and a preparatory cycle covering grades 7-9. The secondary cycle – grades 10-12 under the Jordanian system and 10-11 for the Egyptian – was not compulsory, and was divided into three streams: literary, scientific and vocational. This cycle was concluded with a matriculation exam called *Tawjihi* (Abu-Duhou, 2000).

The systems of education were Jordanian and Egyptian in nature – they supported the agendas of those two countries and the state priorities for those populations. In both Jordan and Egypt, this included expansion in enrolment and an increase in the average number of years of schooling. While expansion in access continued apace, it did not correspond to a large infusion of new resources. Jordan did not increase its education budget by much, and Egypt was not keen to see Gaza become a drain on its finances. Both Jordanian and Egyptian administrations expanded the education system, but the focus was “on quantity rather than quality” (Brown, 2003: 198).

Moreover, the education systems established in the West Bank and Gaza were focused on developing Egyptian and Jordanian children and

building their national identities. The Palestinian identity, culture and history were largely absent from the curriculum, with students devoting [more attention to] “Pharaonic Egypt and the Hashemite leadership of the Arab revolt than to their particular history” (Brown, 2003: 198). The Jordanians, in particular, were seen to have done nothing to enhance the Palestinian identity; on the contrary, the system worked at smothering and softening any distinctiveness (Assaf, 2004).

Israeli administration

In June 1967, Israel launched what has become known as the Six-Day War, gaining a decisive victory over Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The war resulted in Israel conquering territories of the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula. As a result, Israel became an occupying power, ruling over an additional 1 million Palestinians on top of its existing 400,000 Palestinian-Israeli citizens. Following the war and rapid occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, Jamal describes Palestinian residents as “in a state of shock” as they found themselves “severed from the rest of the Arab world” (2005: 19).

The years immediately following the war were bloody. In 1968, Yasser Arafat took control of the diaspora-led Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and publicly called for the destruction of Israel (Jamal, 2005). His fighters launched a series of attacks against Israeli targets in the West Bank. Egypt continued a low intensity war in Sinai and, together with Syria, launched the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. A peace treaty was only signed in 1979. Israel invaded southern Lebanon in June 1982, ostensibly to root out the PLO, who were based there after having been driven from Jordan several years before. By August of that year, Arafat and the PLO leadership had fled to Tunis, where they remained for more than a decade. Israel stayed in Lebanon for the next 18 years, occupying a significant portion of the south.

The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza brought with it a system of restrictions that controlled most aspects of Palestinian life. The Israeli military government imposed a series of some 1,100 Military Orders overriding or supplementing existing law – from tree planting to education (Graham-Brown, 1984). Over the first 12 years of occupation, the education system fell under the direct authority of the Israeli Military Governor (ICJ, 1980). Following the 1979 Camp David accords between Israel and Egypt and hope for increased peace, a civil administration was established creating the ‘Office of Education for Judea and Samaria’, as

the West Bank was known to Israelis. The office not only continued to report to the military, but was in fact staffed entirely by military personnel in uniform (Al-Batrawi and Rabbani, 1991).

Much of the education system developed under Jordanian and Egyptian rule was retained throughout this period. Central control continued, with the Israeli military government having full authority over all matters relating to teachers and curriculum in government schools. Levels of investment by no means matched the levels of centralization; only minimal funding was provided, and that mainly went to cover teacher salaries. Schools, libraries, laboratories and teaching standards were all in steady decline. Construction of new schools came virtually to a halt, and teacher training received little to no support (Brown, 2003). Moreover, teachers whose political views were not acceptable were dismissed or transferred to distant locations, while staff numbers were reduced in most areas (ICJ, 1980: 93).

The following measures were introduced during the years under Israeli administration, some of which reinforced previous practice, and all of which left a lingering legacy (Assaf, 1997: 52):

- a highly centralized management system;
- withholding of information from teachers and administrators;
- curricular censorship of textbooks mentioning Palestine;
- prohibition of supplementary materials alongside prescribed textbooks; and
- limited opportunity for teacher training programmes.

While retaining the Jordanian and Egyptian education curricula, the Israelis placed strict controls on teaching of certain subjects, particularly history, geography, civics, literature and religion. Books were censored of any reference to Palestinian heritage and geography, connection to armed struggle and resistance, or anything to do with Arab Nationalism and Zionism (Assaf, 2004). Military Order No. 107 prohibited outright over 55 textbooks in schools (ICJ, 1980). Maps were all changed, as they were required to show Israel and its borders inclusive of occupied territory (Al Zaroo and Hunt, 2003).

The Israeli military and civil administrations were less concerned with the exam system, essentially leaving pre-existing exams such as the *Tawjihi* in place. In the Gaza schools, the Egyptian Ministry of Education continued to administer exams after 1967. In the West Bank, a local examination board was set up in Nablus, working in co-operation with

the Jordanian Ministry of Education to register students for examinations and select examiners (Abu-Duhou, 2000).

During the occupation, charitable societies, NGOs, women's institutions, religious groups and political parties began to get involved in providing non-formal education. Khalil Nakhleh, who worked with the Welfare Association, a major Geneva-based fund set up by diaspora Palestinians, recalled that an Israeli ban on NGO support for government schools "left us to feel like were just nibbling at the margins, and the politics left us unable to focus on systematic change". Education work was thus covered by civil society groups addressing issues from adult literacy to health education, to arts programmes or pre-schools (Al Zaroo and Hunt, 2003).

This focus on alternative education was a necessity rather than a choice; all external support for education had to be channelled through private schools, NGO initiatives or political groups. Palestinians saw these alternatives to formal education as an opportunity to make up for the shortcomings of the recognized system. These efforts, as one observer remembers, were generally developed with a mandate to deliver services "during a period when the Israeli civil administration was letting our society crumble".

The first *intifada*

Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began seriously to challenge the prolonged Israeli occupation when the first *intifada* erupted in December 1987. As a number of peace agreements had been signed between Israel and its neighbours in the preceding decade, those in the OPT began to lose hope of outside liberation and turned to their own resources. The first *intifada* was a "genuine mass movement" with most Palestinians involved and methods ranging from "peaceful protest and civil disobedience to limited violence" (Andoni, 2001: 211).

The uprising left both teachers and students open to a range of repressive measures. Often on political grounds, teachers were forced into compulsory retirement, arbitrary transfer or deduction of pay. Teachers' unions were prohibited altogether. Measures applied to students included expulsion, arrest, detention and prohibition from travelling abroad. The biggest blow to education, however, came in the form of closures.

During the first *intifada*, all Palestinian schools were closed for periods ranging from several months to two years at a time. In the case of

some universities, closures extended to more than four years. “In the first four years of the *intifada*, one-third to one-half of school days were lost” (Brown, 2003: 200). In 1990, children were not able to begin their school year until January, four months after the usual start. Conditions were also bad during the first Iraq war in 1991, when there were reportedly closures for as long as six months at a time. Moreover, according to Al Zaroo and Hunt, “a tenth of the schools were used [by Israel] as military camps and detention centres during the closure period” (2003: 170). Closures were generally seen as a discriminatory policy used to punish the Palestinian community as a whole, as a proxy for insurgents and their supporters (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000).

Education became a centre of this nationalist struggle, with Palestinians battling discrimination and closures by essentially establishing their own parallel system, known as ‘popular education’. The closure of universities led many faculty members and university students to become involved. Neighbourhood committees were set up to support the campaign and give space for classes to take place. Government, private and UNRWA schools began working together to create home schools and prepare take-home lessons for students. Many teachers continued to work as volunteers in their own neighbourhood, and “[took] responsibility for continuing the process of teaching” (Qaimari, 2004: 3).

The Israeli authorities deemed the popular education campaign illegal. With schools closed, other education alternatives were officially blocked. Attempts to home school children were considered criminal acts, and students “caught participating were subject to harassment, arrest and were liable to be jailed for a period of up to ten years and fined [up to] USD5000” (Sfeir and Bertoni, 2003: 11). These policies somewhat backfired, as they effectively encouraged further youth involvement in the *intifada* by leaving them with time on their hands. As Fronk, Huntington and Chadwick explained, “[i]ncreased discipline problems, drop-outs, fascination with resistance ... were among the first signs of the *intifada*’s influence [on] Palestinian education” (1999: 230). Sfeir and Bertoni assert that the disruptions of the first *intifada* “led to a long-lasting drop in academic standards at all levels of education” (2003: 11).

During this widespread disruption in the formal schooling system, involvement in ‘popular education’ – either as a teacher or student – offered a positive way to be part of the struggle. “As a people we were depending on ourselves,” explains a Ramallah-based teacher who

taught a class in her home, “this was our way of resistance”. According to Mahshi and Bush (1989), this atmosphere of mass resistance during the first *intifada* afforded opportunities for radical change by creating a “giant educational laboratory” that challenged conservative educators to start afresh.

Much of the support for civil society organizations prior to the first *intifada* came via the PLO from Arab donors such as the Jordanian-Palestinian Joint Committee or the Islamic Development Bank. Few donors independently supported indigenous groups, such as the Welfare Association mentioned above (Nakhleh, 2004). However, as the *intifada* began, and particularly following the 1991 Iraq war, “there was a ‘quantitative shift’ in funding available to Palestinian NGOs” from both western and Arab sources (Hanafi and Tabar, 2004: 226). Newly-emerging NGOs covered a wide range of sectors, and were notably strong in delivering medical and agricultural services. Education NGOs significant at that time included the Early Childhood Resource Centre (ECRC), Tamer Institute and the al-Mawrid Teacher Development Centre.

Part of the early strength of civil society groups came from working together. During the first *intifada*, educational NGOs came together under an umbrella that they called the Education Network. There were around twelve members at the beginning, using the Friends Boys’ School as a point of meeting and discussion. Asia Habash of the ECRC was one of the network’s founders. She explained that this group wanted first to cope with the effects of the occupation on the education system, but also to go beyond that to pose alternatives to traditional educational methods. As discussed later, these progressive ideas were somewhat at odds with the education plans of the PLO and its emerging political leadership (Brown, 2003).

In the 1970s, the planning department of the PLO had introduced the “Project of Educational Philosophy for the Palestinian People” (Jamal, 2005: 66). Over the period of the occupation, this influenced a nationalist agenda towards support for the education sector. During the first *intifada*, political factions began to associate more freely and quickly wanted to show tangible benefit. “In particular, the factions provided key social services to the Palestinian community, for example through clinics, kindergartens, women’s groups, or providing direct assistance to needy families” (Shomaly, 2004: 14). Since then, political groups have continued to provide such support. For instance, Hamas in particular has built a strong base through provision of social services,

including building schools and operating pre-schools. Fatah also conducts educational, cultural and social programmes for young members, but is less of a direct service provider.

Box 1. The Council for Higher Education

Prior to 1967 there had been no institutions of higher education in the territory. Any students who wanted further education went to Jordan, Egypt or elsewhere in the Arab world. The 1970s and 1980s saw the establishment of several Palestinian universities. To co-ordinate efforts, the Council for Higher Education was formed in 1977. As universities had not existed when the Israeli civil administration took over, they did not fall under the military education officer, who was responsible only for basic education (Assaf, 1997).

After the occupation, no national Palestinian body was officially allowed to work on general education. While the Council kept a focus on higher education, in the mid-1980s it began to work on general education for want of anyone else. As the first *intifada* took hold, the curriculum for a future Palestinian State was one of the first things on the education agenda. In 1990, a conference in Paris, hosted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), considered components of primary education curriculum. This was followed up in 1991 with a workshop in Jerusalem to look at a secondary school curriculum. Sami Adwan, a curriculum expert at Bethlehem University, recalls immediately struggling with contentious issues. “I remember a long discussion at the second conference on how to handle maps of historic Palestine – unfortunately fifteen years later we still have no good answers”.

In 1992, as political negotiators were getting closer to reaching a peace agreement, the PLO tasked the Council to develop a plan to address education concerns beyond curriculum. As the PA was set up in 1994, these files were handed over and formed the basis for initial action on education issues. In fact, more than files were turned over: A number of Council staff went with them and formed the core of a new Ministry team.

Oslo Accords and handover

As the *intifada* grew, the Cold War ended and the first Iraq war took hold, the international community became increasingly interested in brokering a solution between Israel and the Palestinians. A visible start to the peace process began with the Madrid Conference in 1991, at which the PLO was sidelined. However, as the official representative of

the Palestinian people ever since its recognition by the UN in 1974, the PLO could not easily be ignored. In 1988, in a retraction of an earlier rejection of Israel, Arafat declared Palestinian nationalism as reconciled to a two-state solution. Certain Israeli leadership began to see the PLO as a viable negotiating partner for Israel and opened a 'secret channel' of talks in Oslo (Lochery, 2005).

The Oslo Accords, as the result of these talks and its later agreements became known, culminated with a famous handshake on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993 between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat. As the first major step toward peace, the Declaration of Principles Agreement was signed. Final status negotiations on a Palestinian state were planned to be completed by 1999.

During these and later negotiations, the PLO continued to press for control over the education system (Brown, 2003). The Gaza-Jericho Autonomy Agreement – sometimes referred to as 'Oslo I' – was signed on 4 May 1994 and established the PA. Arafat arrived in Gaza to begin forming the new administration in July. The next step in the process, the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities, led to a transfer of power from Israel to the PA in primary social services. Education and culture were the first of these to be handed over on 29 August 1994. Thus the first Palestinian education ministry was born.

The first challenge for the new MoEHE was the first day of school, scheduled just three days later for 1 September. The new minister, Yasser Amr, made a decision to go ahead and open schools, which at the time created a real 'story on the street'. Of course, "two days were not enough by any standard to prepare for the beginning of a new school year" (Assaf, 1997: 59). In the first days of operation, members of the new education ministry went out to each district to try to find and meet the school administrators. Khalil Mahshi, one of the first staff, remembered:

> "It was a difficult task, as nothing was handed to us. The process took two to three weeks, and we had no contacts with Israeli officials to follow up anything. We had to go to each district in West Bank and Gaza to symbolically sign over. That meant we became owner of the property and employers of all the teachers. But we didn't know where the schools were, or how many staff we had."

Tensions were high during the handover; particularly as the Israeli security forces did not immediately pull out of the West Bank and Gaza.

Those working in education at the time remember, “Israel was watching every move made by the Ministry.” For instance, the decision to raise the Palestinian flag over schools was debated at the Ministry, and then when done was cited as the first violation of the Oslo Accords – although no one reportedly was able to find such a prohibition. Students openly questioned the continued presence of the Israeli military. Recalls one official at the time, “sometimes we had to go to school to stand between the students and the soldiers, and we felt embarrassed that we couldn’t actually protect the students”.

Internal Palestinian divisions began to take shape in the lead up to and during the peace negotiations. While many Palestinians were happy to see progress toward a state, not all believed in the Oslo process, nor were they all supporters of the PLO and its historical legacy. A number within the West Bank and Gaza questioned Arafat’s legitimacy to negotiate their future, as this was done largely without consultation. The central PLO role in the Oslo negotiations essentially placed Fatah, who controlled the PLO, as the state party. Their power bloc was later consolidated by the 1996 general elections, boycotted by a number of parties and particularly Islamist groups (Shikaki, 2002).

Between 1994 and 2000, the Oslo peace process repeatedly stopped and started, leaving an atmosphere of constant uncertainty and feeling of inevitable failure. Despite the constraints of continued occupation, the MoEHE made much progress in creating an education system during this time. In 1994, as the PA took over administration, Palestinian education was seen as “an outdated, second-hand amalgam from other cultures” (Leonard, 1994: 14). As the following chapters show, this is no longer the case.

Lessons learnt

- *Education and its purpose can be defined not only by those in authority, but also by those who participate in schooling*. Historically education was used by occupiers of the OPT as a political tool; but at the same time, Palestinians seized educational opportunities as a means to advance themselves.
- *Seeing oneself reflected in a curriculum is especially significant to a people struggling with questions of sovereignty*. One of the main concerns with previous education systems was that none advanced Palestinian identity, culture or history.
- *When a formal system has broken down, non-formal education can be an important strategy in maintaining learning*. During the first *intifada*, 'popular education' was an attempt to make up for a collapsing education system, made possible through grassroots organizations, charitable societies and NGOs.
- *The inclusion of education in a peace agreement is vital in clarifying authority*. Palestinian negotiators ensured that education was among the first sectors handed over in the Oslo Accords, which was significant as education is one of the largest and most visible services of any governing authority.

Chapter 3

Growing pains

When Palestinians took over the education system in 1994, as one former official described it: “We inherited a shambles”. The MoEHE was faced with two major challenges: first, to build the foundations of a new education system out of one presently in a state of decay; and second, to bring unity to a system characterized by fragmentation. As the Oslo handover progressed, the Ministry, along with new system structures, essentially had to be created overnight. These early years, described throughout the following chapters, were marked by a series of what some have called ‘emergency measures’ aimed at creating a viable system (see *Appendix 1* for the organizational structure of the MoEHE).

During the first year of administration, few changes were made to schooling; instead the focus was on planning and organization. As everything was so new, the MoEHE “decided that during the first year of operation it was inappropriate to rush into administrative or educational changes” (Assaf, 1997: 59). Some questioned what seemed like a lack of action, but the decision of minimal interruption held firm. MoEHE officials say this was partly to ensure the confidence of the people: “For example, we felt that a focus on the *Tawjihi* would maintain faith that a rigorous system was in place”. The decision to open schools three days after the formation of the Ministry also discouraged radical change, as energy was put towards running them.

These years marked the first time that “the main decision makers in the educational system [were] wholly Palestinian” (Van Dyke and Randall, 2002: 22). Selecting those responsible, however, was not always a straightforward process and early staffing at the MoEHE was somewhat contentious. Additionally, the management structure that evolved was complicated by the separated OPT geography of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with their separate Jordanian and Egyptian education systems. On top of these challenges, relations between the MoEHE and NGOs were tense, as the new authority increasingly wanted to control civil society and their actions.

Staffing the Ministry

The first Minister of Education, Yasser Amr, served from 1994 until he resigned in 1998. According to one former official, he was “a politician who knew little about his portfolio – but to his credit, knew enough to surround himself with those experienced in education”. Naim Abu-Hommos, the then deputy minister, acting Minister from 1998 and confirmed Minister of Education from 2002, was considered a strong educationalist with a PhD in education from San Francisco State University. These individuals were responsible for quickly pulling together a leadership team when the MoEHE was created. One of that early team recalled the invitation to join:

> “It was mid-August, and I was in the supermarket when I met one of the men just appointed to a high position at the Ministry. He said to me, ‘Come join the team to set up the Ministry of Education.’ I asked about salaries, and he said, ‘Who cares – together we will look for the money’.”

When asked how this first team was selected, Abu-Hommos remembered Directors-General being chosen by their experience and willingness to do some of the ‘dirty’ work. “I told each of the 12 that you have to be both a chairman and a secretary, and even sometimes the janitor.” At that early point, there was little concern regarding proper recruitment procedures. As one official involved explained: “If you want to build a something, you go out and find others who are like-minded, who also want to build in similar ways”.

During the first three months after handover, from September to November 1994, Israel continued to pay teachers in the Palestinian system. Ownership of the physical facilities was transferred to the MoEHE and rental contracts were likewise transferred to the PA. The Arab staff from the Israeli Civil Administration became MoEHE employees. As there were no files handed over from Israel, the early team had little direct information to guide them. One team member recalled that the “most urgent tasks were to develop records for both teachers and students, and to establish a salary system”.

As the Ministry grew, staff were drawn from a number of sources. Across the PA, top leadership were typically from the PLO ranks as they moved back to the territories, and this was true for a number of educationalists who joined the MoEHE. Other Palestinians were also returning from the diaspora or academic studies abroad. A number of

early officials, including Abu-Hommos, came directly from the Council for Higher Education.

Formation of new PA ministries as a whole exposed a split between the PLO leadership and those from within the OPT who had essentially initiated and sustained the first *intifada* (Shikaki, 2001). This home-grown group felt excluded from the process of forming the new authority, with one prominent politician "publicly and sarcastically critici[zing] senior PA and Fatah figures, claiming that activists from the West Bank and Gaza had been passed over for senior positions" (Brown, 2003: 287).

Ten years on, it is difficult to say exactly how selection played out within the education sector. One NGO leader interviewed for this study was especially sceptical about the make up of the MoEHE. "I was asked to join the Ministry early on, but said I had only one question for them – would I be able to choose the people I am going to work with? The answer came back as 'no'". The implication, of course, is that most staff were political appointees. This is a highly disputed issue. When an MoEHE official was asked to respond, he claimed rather disingenuously that "there were political assignments made in other areas, but not in education".

Regardless of where they came from, nearly all observers concede that MoEHE staff were highly motivated. "After all, we thought a Palestinian state was the next step", remembers one former official. From an initial staff of 12, the MoEHE grew into one of the largest ministries. Based on MoEHE figures provided to the author in May 2005, there were 633 employees at the Ministry offices in Ramallah and Gaza, 38,292 employees in district education offices and 46,417 teachers. While these numbers are impressive, one should note that the PA as a whole has often been accused of "over-inflating its administrative machine", and the MoEHE has made some contribution to this end (Jamal, 2005: 122).

Fractured geography

One of the most challenging issues the MoEHE has had to contend with, along with the rest of the PA, is the fractured geography of the OPT. The potential for fragmentation of any system was considerable. The West Bank and Gaza Strip are themselves unconnected geographical areas, and during 1967-1994 fell under separate Jordanian and Egyptian administrations. Their separate education systems, discussed in some depth in *Chapter 2*, needed both to be harmonized and transformed into a new, unified, education system.

To top this off, the 'Oslo II' agreement, outlining further Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, transformed the map into what has been called a "cartographic cheeseboard" (Wasserstein, 2004: 128). The West Bank was sectioned into a series of enclaves designated as Area A (full Palestinian administration), Area B (Palestinian administration with Israeli security) and Area C (Israeli control). Little has changed in the designation of these areas since they were created. In fact, a number of the 'Area A' enclaves, such as Bethlehem, Jericho and Nablus, have been intermittently re-occupied due to Israeli security concerns (World Bank, 2002*b*).

In this context, even the location of the Ministry headquarters was at first disputed. A few advocated that its first office should be in Jericho, which was one of the first cities fully under Palestinian jurisdiction. Another group thought that the offices should be in Ramallah, as this was the expected future centre of governance. The latter won out, and the team set up in the old offices of *al-Birah* women's teacher training college, until a Ministry building was built several years later. A second MoEHE office was set up in Gaza within the first year.

West Bank and Gaza

The West Bank is a fairly urbanized region, with two thirds of its residents living in approximately 420 villages. The Gaza Strip has a much higher population density – 10 times that of the West Bank – spread between 16 towns and villages (Jamal, 2005). At the time the PA was formed, registered refugees formed 32 per cent of the West Bank population and a much higher 72 per cent of the population in the Gaza Strip (World Bank, 1995: 1). Poverty and unemployment has historically been much higher in Gaza than in the West Bank.

As much as the PA has done to harmonize the system from the West Bank to Gaza, the occupation has left them as very separate territories. In one move to unify them – at least in spirit – there were attempts to call the two separate areas the 'Northern Districts' (West Bank) and the 'Southern Districts' (Gaza Strip; MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005). Many of the Palestinian areas over which the Ministry had jurisdiction were physically separate, and movement between them required Israeli permission. While travel between the territories was then generally easier than today, movement has often been dependant on fluctuations in the political situation and there have always been periods when access was a major problem.

During the first years of what Zainab Alwazir, Assistant Deputy Minister for Gaza, calls the 'Golden Period', the short distance meant that it was relatively easy to go to Ramallah in the West Bank in the morning and return to Gaza for an afternoon of work. Today, the need to obtain permits and pass through checkpoints means that the trip is virtually unheard of. When a group of boys in Gaza was asked how life might be different in the West Bank, they responded: "We don't go there, we feel like it is another country".

Ronald Sultana points out that: "This fragmentation could easily have deteriorated to the extent of having two 'ministries' of education in the different territories". To cope with this risk, a decision was made that "irrespective of the educational background and experience of applicants to a particular vacancy at the MoEHE, there would be a representation of both West Bank and Gaza Strip in key posts" (2002: 73). The MoEHE has also tried to take advantage of technology, frequently using the phone and more recently e-mail to support communication between the two regions. Several years ago the World Bank even set up a video link for officials to use in meetings.

While there has been strong commitment by the Ministry to support the West Bank and Gaza Strip equally, there are inevitable differences. The large refugee population in Gaza means that UNRWA plays a much bigger role in education provision, nearly at the same level as the MoEHE. There are fewer tertiary institutions in Gaza, and one official said: "Now that our students cannot go to the West Bank to university, it seems more are beginning to drop out". Gaza also loses out somewhat in NGO project distribution – including that for education – which is "extremely lopsided". Nineteen per cent of NGO projects take place in the Gaza Strip, versus 81 per cent for the West Bank (Hanafi and Tabar, 2004: 235).

Decentralization

Movement restrictions between the divided geography of the two areas of West Bank and Gaza, as well as the splintered divisions of areas A, B and C, would make decentralization difficult even with the best of intentions. However, by most reports, the MoEHE generally lacked interest in decentralization throughout the 1990s. Given the system's centralized history, as well as the models of education systems in surrounding countries, the limited focus on decentralization is unsurprising.

In the first years of the PA, schools often complained that the district did not involve them enough in decisions on school activities. A functional audit of the educational administration conducted in 1999 showed that schools did not have a clear view of education rules and regulations as they apply locally. Head teachers referred to the head of the district education directorate on the most important issues. Knowledge of how the education leadership was organized was the result of personal connections and not of official information. Most head teachers were not familiar with the structure of the MoEHE or the officials concerned (Saidi, 2000).

Box 2. Role of Parents' Councils

There is officially a Parents' Council for every school – with boys' schools represented by fathers and girls' schools by mothers. Regulations specify that Parents' Councils should strengthen the ties between parents and teachers; increase co-operation and sharing of views; reinforce cultural values respecting the teacher; and encourage co-operation to solve problems (MoEHE, 2000b).

However, council set-up varies widely from one community to the next. In most, there are five or six elected parents, with the principal as head. Some councils are very active, like that of the Jenin High School for Girls. Mothers from the school see the council as a way, through monthly meetings, to follow-up on their daughters' behaviour and to be more aware of exam results. They also arrange Open Days for other parents that highlight student activities. A group of fathers at Almuhammadieh School in Hebron explained that they provide some maintenance for the school and raise funds to cover tuition for poorer students. Some parents' councils play a major role in school construction, but again this is not standard for all.

A number of those consulted for this study indicated that Parents' Councils are often not very active. If they are active, they are guided mainly by the head teacher. A group of students in Gaza helped explain this situation. One girl said: "It is sometimes difficult as our parents are not all well-educated". Another added: "My mother doesn't join in because she often gets asked for money and cannot afford it". To some extent, community participation in education reflects a cultural context with high respect towards authority. In the OPT, there is a view that the 'teacher knows best' and the pupil is there to receive knowledge and wisdom. Several NGO leaders emphasized the fact that it is difficult to then encourage, or reward, the active critical participation of the parents in the education of their children.

Reinforcing these findings, the World Bank emphasized the limited decision-making it found at district level:

> "The main responsibility for the districts appears to be implementing central level instructions, as conveyed by the separate general directorates to individual units of the district office. These instructions are numerous, sudden, urgent, poorly coordinated, and sometimes conflicting" (World Bank, 2001: 74).

In recent years there has been a movement towards greater decentralization, but not necessarily improvement in information sharing. There is no clear policy on this issue, and many of the decisions that have devolved seem to be rather unintended. The current push towards decentralization has come with the second *intifada*, as increased military occupation has made communication and movement of people increasingly difficult within and between the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Devolution comes with the risk that the MoEHE will become increasingly immobilized and the cantonization of the territory entrenched.

Tension with civil society

Expectations were high as the PA began its governance. It wasn't long, however, before "protest and contention were directed against the PA as much as against Israeli authority" (Jamal, 2005: 142). In the education sector, teachers wanted increased salaries and improved conditions; religious bodies wanted fundamental values in the schools; and progressive leaders wanted educational transformation. Having played an important role in education before and during the first *intifada*, NGOs now wanted both a central role and clear autonomy in their work. It is hardly surprising that not everyone would get what they wanted.

After the formation of the PA, there were real growing pains in disputes with progressives over the new curriculum and with teachers' unions over salary issues. These will be discussed later in some depth. However, the struggles of NGOs are especially illustrative of the new authority's relationship with a number of groups. With challenges not confined to the education sector, Hanafi and Tabar describe the wider dynamic at the time. The NGO sector was made up of:

> [a] network of institutions and service providers that could have been one of the building blocks of the emerging state ... However, the [PA] did not use this infrastructure and chose to create its own separate ministries and institutions, declaring itself the 'only legitimate

development authority' and asking donors to channel funds to its ministries" (2004: 227).

The World Bank estimates that in the early 1990s Palestinian NGOs received between 140 and 222 million US$ annually from external sources. By 1994, this support had contracted to 90 million. It then fell to 60 million in the two following years, "a loss in external revenue of between a half and three-quarters during a six-year period" (World Bank, 1997: 5). Education features prominently in NGO work; as much as 23 per cent of total NGO funding was being used in the education sector between 1995 and 1998 (Hanafi and Tabar, 2004). Much of this support went to larger NGOs, which had increasingly professionalized their work, rather than smaller community-based organizations.

NGOs spent much time navigating a relationship with the new PA, in addition to dealing with shifts in funding. Animosity between the two was sometimes quite bitter. In the first several years after Oslo, the PA tested controls on public meetings, selective audits, and imposition of legal framework. The new authority was reportedly concerned about the flow of aid reaching NGOs that fell out of their sphere of control, as well as some NGO leaders' links to the political opposition. They did not always deal with these concerns productively, and one NGO actor working in education remembers several "public attacks toward us, with accusations of Western influence, and worries that we were pocketing money from the donors".

Brown argues that much of this wrangling was down to perspective, "The [PA] sought not to destroy NGOs but to bring them into line; the NGOs sought not total independence from the [PA] but merely autonomy and a willingness to use state authority to support their work without dictating it" (2003: 148). On the MoEHE side, co-operation with NGOs has been largely bilateral and project-specific. As described by one official: "We propose needs and they offer projects". An NGO leader working on education explained: "We don't dare move an inch without the approval of the MoEHE, but then again we've made a conscious decision to allow that". Another expressed greater frustration: "While I can see the success the Ministry has had, and the difficulties they've struggled with, it's not enough. We could have achieved much more if we worked together".

NGOs continued their activities regardless of tensions, leaving ministries such as the MoEHE with the question of how to co-ordinate disparate actors. One NGO leader described the MoEHE's attempts at

co-ordination as “weak, which for them is an indirect way of saying ‘no’ to us.” The donor co-ordination group sometimes invited NGOs. However, there was no standard civil society representation in the group. At one point there was an effort to create a national committee for early childhood care and development involving the Ministries of Education, Social Affairs, Health and Planning, together with Bethlehem University, ECRC and some NGOs. After about a year, however, the effort fell apart.

This has left NGOs to co-ordinate between themselves. The Education Network, which played a strong co-ordination role during the first *intifada*, struggled with the shifting environment and effectively fragmented into its individual members. Several years later, when the new PA was being particularly heavy-handed, large and more secular NGOs banded across sectors to form the Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO). They lobbied and eventually influenced changes to a proposed NGO law to be friendlier to their interests. There has been some co-ordination on education advocacy through PNGO, and later through the Palestinian Child Rights Coalition. There have also been attempts under the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) to bring together an education group.

While a number of NGOs did not survive the early years, others did. Examples of some of the more prominent Palestinian NGOs today involved in education include:

- the ECRC, which provides training for kindergarten teachers and has produced psychosocial guidebooks. It is the lead Palestinian organization in early childhood education;
- the Tamer Institute for Community Education, which focuses on literacy, reading campaigns and work with youth;
- the Teacher Creativity Centre, a major organization supporting teachers through training, with emphasis on human rights, democracy and civic education.

Other major Palestinian NGOs that have worked on education issues in one form or another include the Al-Haq legal association, al-Mawrid Teacher Development Centre, Al-Qattan Centre for Educational Research & Development, Ca’naan Institute, Defence for Children International (DCI) Palestine, Educational Network Centre and the Palestinian Counselling Centre (PCC). There is also the Right to Education Campaign of Birzeit University. International NGOs working

in education include Diakonia, Save the Children (Sweden, US and UK) and World Vision.

Beyond this, many smallish NGOs and charitable societies continue to be involved in education in some sense. In a 2002 mapping, the Palestine Economic Policy Research Institute found 926 Palestinian NGOs, with 76 per cent based in the West Bank and 24 per cent based in Gaza. The largest group of these are focused on youth and sports, with the second largest number providing childhood services. Of overall NGO funding, 17 per cent goes to early childhood services and 6 per cent to basic education (World Bank, 2004).

In the late 1990s the World Bank set up a three-year US$15 million capacity building project for NGOs. Administered by the Welfare Association, 48 per cent of the 305 projects implemented were categorized as formal education (World Bank, 2003*a*). The World Bank was able to directly fund NGOs only because the OPT was not a recognized state, which of course did nothing to allay the earlier tension and competition for resources between the PA and NGOs.

Over time, there was progressive improvement in the relationship between the MoEHE and some of the above NGOs. An observer familiar with the workings of both claims that: "At first, the Ministry relied heavily on NGOs for methods and ideas on reforms, however they would be loath to ever admit that". NGO leaders say that after the PA was formed they initially had to work outside the education system to be involved, often with teachers' unions, pre-schools or youth groups. However, collaboration slowly began. The Ca'naan Institute in the Gaza Strip began to work closely with PA officials in 1996 when the local directorate approached them to do a teacher training course. Issa Sabah, director of Ca'naan, believes that it would have been nearly impossible to start this partnership earlier.

> "It took time for officials to understand their own jobs first, and even then they had only ever seen an education system closed to civil society. They thought there were magical solutions, and they should find them. Over time, the realization has come – from both sides – that we have to work together because there is no magic."

As Brown highlights, relations between authorities and civil society have continued – "an interdependence that was far greater than either side anticipated, wanted or ever fully acknowledged" (2003: 139).

Lessons learnt

- *Transparency in hiring is an essential part of the shift from political movement to government*. In the OPT, MoEHE staff were first chosen by willingness and ability, with a transparent process perhaps taking longer than it should to have been put in place.
- *A centralized approach to governance might improve unity in a disparate territory, but at the expense of ownership and decision-making at the more local levels*. Influenced by the legacy of occupying powers, the centralized education system in the OPT stems primarily from an attempt to unify separate systems and geography.
- *A society struggling for liberation builds strong civic groups which, as a new authority emerges, can be redefined as partners or remain as opposition*. The PA and MoEHE have had an uneasy relationship with such groups, and particularly NGOs, being slow to recognize the innovation and added value they bring.

Chapter 4

An emerging system

According to one high-ranking official: “The first school year in 1994-1995 was purely crisis management. In the second year, we began some work on teacher training and curriculum development, but it wasn’t until the third year and beyond when we really started to think about the future”. An official involved in the early days of the MoEHE explained: “My first day at work, there were 8-10 of us sitting in someone’s apartment trying to think what to do”. He went on to add: “Many of the staff were experts at a micro-level, but not at the macro, building a national system.”

Sorting out planning, law, budgets and donor support are all key in setting up a new education system. At first, the MoEHE laid out urgent needs in a kind of ‘shopping list’. While some plans were made, they remained provisional until a Five-Year Plan was launched in 2000. In terms of education law, no specific legislation has passed under the PA other than for higher education. Previous legal frameworks remain in place, along with international law, which is more central in the territory given its occupied status. Regarding financing, the PA places a relatively high importance on education during its budget allocation process, with education receiving approximately 20 per cent of available funds. The education sector receives among the highest amounts of donor funds distributed in the OPT and could not run the education system without this support.

Educational planning

While a formal sector plan was not developed until five years after the creation of the MoEHE, this does not mean that planning was ignored until then. The Directorate for Public and International Relations at first served as “as a central contact point for coordinating and mobilising aid and the same directorate played a leading role in strategic planning” (Lister and Venäläinen, 2000: 8). Whether by choice or not, this link between donor aid and planning did serve to facilitate outside support to the Ministry’s ‘shopping list’ of needs.

Early plans were somewhat internal and not on public record. Agnes Hanania, now a professor at Birzeit University, was with the MoEHE in its early days and involved in the first planning process. Created in

1995, with support from the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the plan was never published. In developing it, she says: "We didn't have enough data, and what we did have did not always match, but we collected what we could". A small group did much of the planning work, sitting down with each of the general directors and listening to their priorities. "Problems were simple, such as student-teacher ratios, which schools needed windows, the need for technology in the classroom". According to Hanania, the four areas of this first plan included: 1) facilities, with priority on easing overcrowded classrooms, 2) audiovisual aids and procurement of computers for the schools, 3) training for both teachers and administrators, and 4) quality and the need to shift from rote to active learning.

Five-year plan

A formal five-year plan was first discussed in 1998, and took more than a year to prepare. UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) provided technical assistance in developing the plan, and the Ministry set up two working teams – one that focused on policy and a second, more technical, team to work out the details. Consultations were held with Ministry staff from both the West Bank and Gaza in Ramallah. Plans were then presented at the district level, so that stakeholders could be a part of discussions. The resulting *Five-Year Education Development Plan 2000-2005* has five goals. These are:

Goal 1 To provide access to education for all children
Goal 2 To improve the quality of education
Goal 3 To develop formal and non-formal education
Goal 4 To develop management capacity in planning, administration, finance
Goal 5 To develop human resources across the education system.

(MoEHE, 2000*b*: 36)

Furthermore, the plan is based on five developmental principles, with education viewed as a human right, the basis for citizenship, a tool for social and economic development, the basis for values and democracy, and a continuous, renewable and participatory process. On this basis, the goals were developed into a further 30 objectives and 96 related activities spanning the education sector. For a summary of the plan, see *Appendix 2* of this study.

While the MoEHE was the principal actor in preparing the plan, working groups formed of NGO and other stakeholder groups were

consulted (World Bank, 2001). The plan was allegedly created at the behest of donors, who saw problems in focus and co-ordination in the first years of PA operation. "In the mid-90s there was a whole series of disparate projects within the MoEHE, but from a donors' perspective they didn't add up and we didn't know how they fit together; we needed a central document to work around," explained UNESCO's Costanza Farina.

The plan was shared internationally at a consultation held in 1999. This was the first official meeting on the plan to involve donors, and reaction was that the MoEHE was overly ambitious. Khalil Mahshi, who was with the MoEHE at the time, remembers:

> "In the plan, Palestinians kept demanding more things; donors were saying this was unrealistic. We had to have a big consultation workshop where all came together along with the Ministry of Finance to decide – this is what donors can give, this is what Palestinians can give, this is what has to go. It was reduced to about half of what we were looking for."

Minister Abu-Hommos admits the plan was "perhaps slightly over-ambitious". However, he believes support would have never matched requests and that it was worth aiming high. "You also have to remember that we were always getting less than two thirds of what we budgeted". By the time the plan was ready to be implemented, the second *intifada* had started and the education sector was hit with repeated emergencies. Thus the success of the plan, even by MoEHE assessments, is mixed.

> "Implementation appears to have been somewhat fragmented – not surprisingly, given the conflict which has raged for most of its duration – and it has been suggested that the overall policy and vision of the Plan are insufficiently elaborated and are not always evident as the guiding principle for development across the sector" (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 10).

Education for All

Despite difficulties implementing the Five-Year Plan, another planning process was added to the MoEHE responsibilities shortly thereafter. On the global stage, a bold education movement, *Education for All* (EFA), was reaffirmed at the World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000. Meant to address the failure of education systems to reach all children with quality education, EFA had the support of country governments,

donors and UN agencies. One of its requirements is that each nation creates an EFA plan, against which progress can be assessed.

The MoEHE began to work on the development of an EFA plan in early 2002, with a National Forum for EFA. Membership includes the MoEHE, the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA), the Ministry of Health, and NGO and private bodies interested in early childhood development, basic education, literacy, continuing education and vocational training. According to the MoEHE and UNESCO, the Palestinian EFA plan is "derived from the *Five-Year Education Development Plan*, ensuring a close match between the objectives of the national plan and the goals of Education for All" (2005: 10). The plan does reflect EFA goals across different target populations. As such, it attempts to address educational needs of (a) pre-school children; (b) students in basic and secondary education; (c) adults (literacy programmes); and (d) out-of-school learners.

It is unclear what status the EFA plan has as a guiding document, as well as what makes it distinct from the Five-Year Plan. As the EFA plan has not been finalized, the Five-Year Plan has essentially remained the guiding instrument for development of the Palestinian education sector.

Legal frameworks

Education law typically forms a major part of setting up a system, providing a framework for planning and budgeting. However, 10 years after the PA was formed, no such domestic law yet exists. In 1994, as the MoEHE was just being established, it was decided to continue following Jordanian and Egyptian education law, with an expectation that a Palestinian education law would move forward when a new State was created. Because this has never happened, international law plays a *de facto*, but somewhat unenforceable, role in outlining education rights and obligations.

Laws in the OPT from previous administrations, including "the Ottoman Empire, the British Mandate, Egyptian law (in the Gaza Strip), Jordanian law (in the West Bank), Israeli military orders and legislation passed by the Palestinian National Authority" have all maintained some level of legitimacy (Musleh and Taylor, 2005: 13). The MoEHE's Basri Saleh explains that the delay in introducing a general education law is due to some extent to uncertain political status. "We felt the law would need substance related to final status negotiations; for example it should

address authority over schools in Jerusalem". As a new government was established in the territory, the newly-created systems did not necessarily negate that which had come before.

Such legal status can be contentious among Palestinians. While the majority would like to have education clarified (along with other areas), others are more comfortable outside legal frameworks. Cairo Arafat, former head of the Children's Secretariat, explained that: "In our society the word 'rights' and 'laws' have been used against people – they are twisted in ways that deny what they stand for". With laws having done a fair amount of damage, the perspective is that it is better to wait and ensure that an education law is prepared on a solid foundation. There is also a tension between a human rights perspective and religious law. "It's a balance that is not easy to get right; human rights does not refer to God, but with our culture we can't ignore Him", Cairo Arafat further explained.

Over the years, the MoEHE has issued regulations relating to exam procedures, procurement and recruitment. It prepared a compilation of 'Educational Rules and Regulations' that are in use. These policies are based on what existed before as Jordanian and Egyptian law, although they have been modified through experience to some extent. The compilation includes 10 chapters covering aspects such as general education, educational activities, examinations, financial affairs, administrative affairs, supplies, educational supervision, buildings and educational technologies.

While no education law for general education is yet in place, a Law for Higher Education was passed in 1998, and a Child Law enacted in January 2005. The new Child Law does supersede previous legislation on relevant issues (Musleh and Taylor, 2005). Several observers comment that the majority of its articles come more or less directly from the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which makes it valuable but not very context-specific. The law has five articles applicable to education and touches on issues of the right to free education, equity, participation, leisure and children with special needs (see *Appendix 3*).

International law

While difficult to enforce, international law is relevant to Palestinian children's right to education.

> "Because few applicable national laws exist, in their absence it must be assumed that international law sets the standard for application.

This then places a greater onus on international institutions to promote, provide for and monitor the achievement of human rights" (Save the Children, 2004: 7).

States have a primary duty to ensure that rights of their citizens are fulfilled, respected and protected. While the OPT does not have status as a state, certain obligations have been transferred to the PA through the Oslo Accords and subsequent agreements. The transfer of these obligations in relation to education has already been discussed in some depth. The implications of occupation are that while the obligation to fulfil has clearly been transferred, Israel still retains the obligation to respect and protect the right to education.

However, not all accept the legal status of the occupation. Aimed at protecting civilians under military occupation, the *Fourth Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War* and its related Protocols comprise the applicable body of law, often known as International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Evidenced through numerous UN General Assembly resolutions, the international community has agreed on its applicability in the OPT. Israel stands alone in disputing this, acknowledging only limited *de facto* applicability of her own interpretation of the *Geneva Conventions*' "humanitarian provisions" (Adams, Joergensen and Newman, 1984). However, the UN rejects this interpretation and confirms that Israel's obligations under IHL apply in full to the Occupied Territories (Pacheco, 2001).

Regardless of the legal reality of occupation, a number of obligations in relation to education are enshrined in both IHL and human rights law. The following obligations are laid out within IHL:

- Schools are guaranteed protection from military attacks (Protocol I relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts, Article 52, 1977), attacking schools is classed as a war crime (Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, 2002, Article 8);
- In times of internal armed conflict, children shall be provided with the care they require, including education, family reunification and special protection (Protocol II, Article 4.3);
- In situations of military occupation, the occupying power must facilitate institutions 'devoted to the care and education of children' (Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 50, 1949);
- In internal and international armed conflicts, there should be prevention of children's direct participation in hostilities and

the parties must refrain from recruiting children. (Protocol I, Article 77.2; Protocol II, Article 4.3; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, Article 1)

International human rights law, which sets out universal rights to which every person is entitled, is equally applicable in the OPT. Despite the transfer of powers that ostensibly took place under the Oslo agreements, the PA has not taken on full sovereign control. In practice, Israel continues its jurisdiction throughout the OPT through an extensive system of curfews and closures. Israel is party to most human rights conventions; of particular note for this study is the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), which it signed on 3 July 1990.

Some of the main obligations towards education established in human rights law are:

- Ensuring provision of free and compulsory education at primary level, with accessible secondary and technical education (CRC [1989] Article 28; Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1948], Article 26);
- Ensuring non-discriminatory and gender equitable education, with access for children with disabilities, ethnic minorities and unaccompanied children (CRC Article 2);
- Affording quality, relevant education that strengthens respect for human rights and promotes peace, builds on a child's potential and supports their cultural identity (CRC Article 29; Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1948] Article 26);
- Provision of psychosocial support and appropriate enriched curriculum (CRC Article 29).

International law entitles a right to education for every child worldwide. This is as true for Palestinian children as it is for any child, anywhere. However, in the OPT, those with the duty to fulfil this right – the PA, the MoEHE, district education authorities, principals, teachers and parents – are for the large part constrained by an occupation that does little to respect or protect education and other related rights.

Budget allocation

When the PA was first established, it of course had no tax base and thus no domestic budget. The World Bank, a major backer of developing countries, could not lend to the PA, as the West Bank and Gaza Strip

did not form a sovereign state. However, donors came to the rescue and "within weeks of the famous White House handshake, over 40 donors ... pledge[d] US$2.4 billion over the next five years for Palestinians in West Bank and Gaza to provide support in what was considered a post-conflict setting" (World Bank, 2002*b*: 1).

While a large amount of these commitments were disbursed bilaterally, nearly half were channelled through the World Bank's Emergency Assistance Programme (EAP), which supported recurrent, technical assistance and public investment expenses. Central to the EAP was the Holst Fund, a trust fund set up specifically to support start-up and recurrent costs of the administration. The World Bank described the Holst Fund as "an innovative response to a clear need ... the donor community had never done anything quite like this" (2002*b*: 9). Indeed, it was the first time a multi-donor trust fund was set up to support salaries. Between June 1994 and April 1996, the fund disbursed more than US$200 million and, along with other support channelled through the EAP, played a significant role in the PA's early progress.

The MoEHE began to get its own house in order as the PA started building a budget through domestic revenue and tax transfers from Israel. The European Community (EC) directly supported salaries for senior MoEHE staff in 1994 and, "later on in 1995/1996 ... provided funds to cover the salaries of basic and secondary school teachers for about three months" (Nakhleh, 2004: 124). The MoEHE began to speak directly to donors and did well during an "initial period of competition between the ministries to approach the donors separately" (Hanafi and Tabar, 2004: 223). Among the various sectors, the education system has the highest external revenue, with donor, technical and financial support (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005).

As time has passed, the PA began to draw on its own resources and took increasing control over donor budget support. Commitment to education has been high within the PA leadership since that time. Budgetary allocations to the sector generally hovered just below the 20 per cent mark throughout the 1990s. In 2004, the PA's allocation to education represented more than 21 per cent of its total budget. Education is second only to security allocations, which make up 40 per cent of the PA's budget (World Bank, 2001).

Costs for implementing the full Five-Year Plan for education were estimated at US$1.5 billion. This included US$1.2 billion in operating

expenses – mostly salaries – and the remainder of US$0.3 billion for buildings and other capital expense. In turn, this would mean that the MoEHE budget would need to reach US$480 million by 2004/2005 (Birzeit University, 2002). In 2003/2004, the most recent year for which full budget figures are available, education sector expenditure reached US$330 million, including salaries and other costs (MoEHE, 2004*c*). This is approximately 30 per cent short of annual targets in the five-year plan.

As with most education systems, salaries overwhelmingly dominate the MoEHE budget. Operational costs make up 85 per cent of the sector budget, and 90 per cent or more of the operational costs are for school staff salaries. Both the PA and donors are concerned about this balance, calling for "a better ratio between salaries and other recurrent costs" (Lister and Venäläinen, 2000: 8). This has become a more urgent concern since the *intifada*, as the PA's capacity to pay recurrent costs has fallen.

Public investment in education, such as school construction and textbook printing, has been largely financed from external sources. These tangible contributions are attractive for donors, and often are laid out in the form of projects. In Lempinen and Repo's analysis, "[t]he PA has focused its scarce financial resources on the recurrent costs for basic and secondary education while using substantial donor support for investment and development of the educational system" (2002: 4). Additionally, with more than 90 per cent of the education budget devoted to basic education, the costs of pre-school and non-formal education activities are largely covered by fees generated and external donations (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005).

Although education is officially free in the OPT, a 'contribution' – effectively a school fee – has traditionally been expected from most students. These fees form some 50 per cent of individual schools' recurrent budgets (World Bank, 2003). Fees are not exorbitant, and have dropped in real terms over the decade under the MoEHE, from US$20 to the current US$11 per term in primary school, and from US$27 to now US$16 in secondary (MoEHE personal interview; World Bank, 1995). However, these costs do present hardship for an increasing number of families.

While there is strong domestic allocation of budget to education within given resources, within the MoEHE the budgeting process is neither "contestable, nor transparent". The World Bank asserts that "there

is no sound fiscal analysis" and that the current budget "is not based on comprehensive knowledge of all the funding available for education investments" (2001: 5). The Palestinian community also shares some of these concerns. During this research, one parent questioned MoEHE choices, asking: "How much money is spent on things like schools and textbooks rather than quality issues like good teaching?" Another saw the fact that security is funded at twice the rate of education as a kind of "theft of education from our children".

Box 3. Corruption in the Palestinian Authority

Corruption in the PA first came to light in a report issued by the PA's Public Oversight Office in May 1997. This report accused "several ministers of misusing and wasting public money, and it charged some with corruption" (Jamal, 2005: 135). A public debate between the president and the elected Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) ensued. Charges ranged from "mere inefficiency" to "wasteful extravagance", with most infractions in the form of monopolistic trade concessions (Brown, 2003: 108). A major concern, both domestically and among donors, was that President Arafat seemed unwilling to do much to tackle the problem.

With such charges hanging over the PA, it is unsurprising that these allegations at times affected perceptions of the MoEHE. However, during this study, a number of those interviewed claimed that the MoEHE was the least corrupt of all ministries. One UN official emphatically stated that "the perception of corruption in the MoEHE is wrong, we've done audits, tested systems, and are satisfied."

This is corroborated by the report of a Special Committee charged by the PLC to investigate charges of corruption. The MoEHE was the only government agency within the scope of the investigation found to be free of corruption and to deserve special mention for the fact (PLC, 1997). In the words of one MoEHE official: "This trust has made a positive difference to donor commitments". However, these allegations continue to colour attitudes towards the whole of the PA. "The percentage of Palestinians who believe there is significant corruption in PA institutions jumped from about 50 per cent in 1996 to more than 85 per cent last year" (Jones, 2005: np).

Donor support

Donor support to the PA averaged at over US$200 per capita in aid per year, the highest level of assistance in any post-conflict setting to date, save Bosnia (World Bank, 2002*b*). From 1994-99, "about 92 per cent ...

was directed to the government apparatus, the PA, and the rest to civil society organisations" (Nakhleh, 2004: 21).

All aid agencies shared the objective of consolidating the peace process. This common purpose "shaped the way the donors intervened in the society." Fundamentally, it led them to "fuse developmentally oriented initiatives with overarching political objectives" (Hanafi and Tabar, 2004: 216). Brouwer (2000) outlines the priorities of most western donors – including the USA and EU – as Israeli security, consolidating Palestinian support for the peace process, and further economic liberalization.

For instance, the need to consolidate peace was aimed at a two-state solution and thus to create a second 'state'. Resources flowed towards establishing the new authority, along with creating visible benefit through investment in infrastructure. Given the charged environment, such expectations were perhaps too self-assured, as illustrated by the World Bank:

> "The Bank was politically naïve and overly-optimistic, along with other donors, in the early years: the entire donor community expected that both economic development and the political process would proceed smoothly" (2002*b*: 31).

Once the PA was established, the MoEHE official initially responsible for setting up donor relations, Khalil Mahshi, remembers being drowned with donor money. On reflection, he saw donors in one of three categories, "(a) donors with 'ready-made projects in mind'; (b) donors 'seeking to know what the Ministry's priorities were' before releasing funds; and (c) 'the destructive group' that included 'companies who wanted you to sign separate agreements.'" (Sommers, 2004: 85). This last group often focused on projects that were not really needed at the time.

Between 1996 and 2000, donors allocated between US$38 million and US$58 million annually to education, amounting to between 9 and 11 per cent of total donor disbursements (MoEHE, 2000*b*). Initially, the bulk of donor commitments went to pay teacher salaries, along with constructing and rehabilitating schools. MoEHE statistics show the major areas of donor support have been construction (39 per cent), higher education (25 per cent) and emergency measures (12 per cent; MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 8).

Donor co-operation is established through bilateral agreements, meaning that the MoEHE is typically forced to deal separately with each donor, following their procedures and regulations (MoEHE, 2004*c*). Thus implementation itself took place through a variety of channels – the MoEHE, UN agencies, NGOs and the donor-created Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction (PECDAR) all played a part. Lister and Venäläinen have pointed out that such a "multiplicity of different implementation arrangements does impose costs" (2000: 25).

PECDAR deserves special mention, as it was set up specifically by the World Bank following the Oslo Accords to be an implementer for major projects, including school construction. Because the PA did not represent a sovereign state, and moreover at first had little to no capacity, PECDAR was initially an arm of the PLO. As stipulated in the World Bank's first Emergency Support Programme:

> "PECDAR would be the Borrower while the responsibility for the implementation of specific sectoral components would rest with the [MoEHE] ... To expedite project implementation ... PECDAR will assist [the Ministry] in the procurement of major civil works and goods contracts" (World Bank, 1995: 12).

From its formation, PECDAR was meant to be transitional, only existing until technical ministries could be established. However, years later, PECDAR is still implementing donor investment projects, to the consternation of many within the ministries. The difficulty for donors is that it is seen as competent and reliable, unlike some of the ministries (World Bank, 2002*b*)

A breakdown of donor aid to education is not readily available, both because the money does not all flow through central channels and because many projects are multi-sectoral. A record is kept by the Ministry of Planning and International Co-operation (MoPIC), as all donors are meant to report their aid allocations within the territories. *Table 2* gives details of aid commitments to general education (all education sub-sectors minus tertiary). Disbursement years range between 1990-2005, with the vast majority of funds being disbursed in the last decade. It may be the case that not all donors have kept up to date with their reporting, and thus this chart does not represent a full picture. However, it was the most comprehensive overview found in the course of this research. According to MoPIC, 18 donors have contributed, with the EC, Norway, Belgium and France emerging as the biggest donors to education.

Table 4.1 Donor contributions to general education 1990-2005, in US$ millions

Donor	**Examples of projects**	**Aid commitment**	**Disbursed funds**
Belgium	Support to printing textbooks School building and rehabilitation Support to TVET and curricula	25.6	8.2
Canada	Remedial and distance education Teacher training	5.8	0.0
EC	School construction, labs, libraries School participation in governance Establishing VTET facilities	29.5	21.7
Finland	Learning material development Assessment and evaluation	11.3	9.7
France	French language teaching School construction and equipment	23.1	14.0
Greece	Construction of schools	1.0	0.9
Ireland	Printing of school textbooks Outreach programme	3.7	2.4
Italy	Support to the education system	9.0	9.0
Japan	School construction, rehabilitation Early childhood education	15.6	9.4
Netherlands	School construction School book printing	16.3	13.4
Norway	Teacher training in-service Administrative buildings and schools	28.2	24.1
Saudi Arabia	School rehabilitation	2.0	2.0
South Korea	School improvement project	2.3	0.0
Spain	School construction/rehabilitation	5.3	2.5
Sweden	Counselling	2.0	1.0
UK	Sector management Reducing impact of violence	7.1	6.7
USA	School construction /rehabilitation	7.1	7.1
World Bank	Policy, planning and budgeting	7.0	5.9
Total		**209.9**	**138.0**

Source: MoPIC, 2005*b*.

Aid co-ordination

The MoEHE and donors recognized the need for a formal co-ordination structure early on. Gaps in planning and co-ordination meant that donors, UN agencies and NGOs all had the potential to be duplicating efforts. Furthermore, there were so many different projects in the Ministry that they had to constantly keep abreast of differing donor

requirements. "An elaborate structure for aid coordination was developed, in part to fill the vacuum created by the absence of well-developed planning and administrative structures on the government side" (Lister and Venäläinen, 2000: 6).

The Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) was thus formed in 1995, partly to co-ordinate donor priorities and contributions. Leadership sits with a line ministry (the Gavel Holder), a designated donor (the Shepherd), and a UN agency (the Secretariat). For education, these roles were filled by the MoEHE, the French mission and UNESCO respectively. The broader membership of the ESWG primarily included donors, with membership being relatively fluid. One space has been reserved for civil society. Until recently, the ESWG met twice a year and the meetings were very large, with more than 30 in the room at times.

On the whole, sector working groups "were of variable quality, with education considered the best" (World Bank, 2002*b*: 16). Even so, the ESWG did not have an easy start, and the initial co-ordination meetings were characterized by officials as "confusing, upsetting, and so difficult" (Sommers, 2004: 85). Donors interviewed for this study did not necessarily believe that the ESWG improved over time. One claimed: "When donor meetings were so big, it was difficult to analyze and discuss issues – and those that would get discussed were often the big ticket items like construction and textbooks".

In 1999, a review of aid co-ordination and donor priorities was carried out. According to Lister and Venäläinen, (2000) in this report, Palestinian concerns included:

- donors following their own priorities;
- too much emphasis on technical assistance;
- too much aid remaining offshore;
- implementation channels biased against regular PA agencies;
- a heavy administrative burden imposed by donor procedures;
- poor information flows; and
- some donors taking a long time for project preparation and implementation.

Donors highlighted their concerns as:

- an underlying worry that the traditional focus on projects was flawed;
- the syndrome of new investments continuing while the operation and maintenance of existing assets and services is neglected; and

- confidence having been shaken by accumulated experience that even carefully selected and designed projects do not succeed or survive due to a poor policy or institutional environment.

Box 4. UN and World Bank activities in OPT

Multilateral agencies have also played a key role in support for education. Each bases its own priorities on its mandate and, presumably, is less tied to political concerns than bilateral donors. As the UN agencies responsible for education, children and development, respectively, UNESCO, UNICEF and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) have all been active in the OPT education sector. The World Bank has also been involved through management of trust funds and co-ordination of several large-scale projects.

UNESCO has served as the ESWG secretary and played a big role in establishing the MoEHE and training its officials. In addition, it set up the first centre for curriculum development. UNESCO IIEP was brought in to support the development of the Five-Year Plan and provide technical assistance.

UNICEF was always active in ESWG and worked on issues that were more 'child' than 'system' focused, such as quality, gender and protection. Early on, UNICEF provided support in education management information systems (EMIS). Activities have included an annual Back to School campaign, Child Friendly Schools project, support for remedial education and a strong role in developing the Palestinian Children's Law.

UNDP has worked primarily on infrastructure and reconstruction of schools, with large support for equipment and computers for schools.

In addition to managing trust funds, the World Bank has supported three main projects contributing to the education sector:

(1) The Education and Health Rehabilitation Project, which focused on rehabilitating schools, supplying teaching equipment, and developing the institutional capacity of the MoEHE (World Bank, 1995);

(2) The Education Action Project, supporting implementation of the Five-Year Plan, including (i) training, (ii) school construction, (iii) vocational training, and (iv) overall sectoral management (World Bank, 2001); and

(3) The Emergency Support Services Project, supporting recurrent costs and textbook provision during the second *intifada* (World Bank, 2002*a*).

Building on these concerns, donor harmonization, or lack thereof, has been a long-term issue. From a recipient perspective, "[t]he ideal situation would be a single common programme, with all donors pooling funds through a single disbursement channel operated by the government" (Lister and Venäläinen, 2000: 2). A Finnish-sponsored report exploring harmonization recommended that the sector-wide approach be adopted. Co-ordinated pooling or basket funding would allow for greater flexibility in spending according to the highest priorities (Lempinen and Repo, 2002). However, as Keijo Rukoranto of Finnish Aid explained: "When the *intifada* started, other issues took precedence and harmonization no longer seemed so urgent."

Lessons learnt

- *Education planning is not only about vision, but also about donor harmonization*. In OPT, the push for a Five-Year Plan seems to have initially been driven by donor needs, but became the Ministry's own through strong leadership and consultation.
- *Fulfilling education rights can be complicated by uncertain political status, which makes creation of domestic law and application of international law difficult*. The PA's reluctance to develop and enact education law has effectively meant that regulations from former occupying regimes continue.
- *When a new governing authority is formed, support for recurrent costs for a substantial period of time is important to stability*. Several multi-donor trust funds, most notably the Holst Fund, supported wage costs in the PA for a two-year period, with the EC directly supporting teacher salaries.
- *Movement beyond donor co-ordination to harmonized or pooled funds is perceived as a low priority in a crisis*. In OPT, momentum towards an education sector-wide approach stalled with the outbreak of the second *intifada*.

Chapter 5

Access and inclusion

The growth of the Palestinian education system has been phenomenal over the past several decades. Between 1967 and 1994, when the PA assumed responsibility for education, the number of pupils enrolled in basic education had tripled (Birzeit University, 2002). Since 1994, enrolment in all schools including UNRWA and private "increased from 650,000 children to nearly one million in 2003, an increase of over 50 per cent" (MoPIC, 2005*a*: 218).

Part of this increase in students is due to high population growth within the Palestinian community. At 4 per cent per annum, and with half the population already under 15 years, an ever-increasing number of students exerts pressure on overcrowded schools (World Bank, 2002*b*: 3). The population has grown from 2.8 million at the time of the first Palestinian census in 1997 to 3.8 million in 2005. Based on current trends, it is expected to reach 5.1 million by 2015 (PCBS, 2005). With such growth, it is clear that sheer numbers will be a challenge to the education sector for the foreseeable future.

The quantitative challenge of access is to cater for an increased number of pupils annually. In one sense, solving this equation is simple – *x* number of new classrooms are needed for *y* number of new pupils. A focus on construction as a means to solve this issue has been the MoEHE's primary approach. As one donor put it: "Over the first years of Ministry operations, their preoccupation was space for students". As enrolments increase, the need to ensure the inclusion of children who may be somewhat marginalized has become increasingly apparent. Girls, the disabled and working children all at times have the potential to be excluded.

Access across the age spectrum is also an important factor as the PA works towards *Education for All*. In the OPT, early childhood education has both expanded and improved in quality over the years. This is primarily due to the efforts of NGOs and the private sector, as providers of the vast majority of kindergartens. For young people completing their general education, TVET has the potential to provide practical skills for the labour market. However, offerings are limited and only a small minority of students currently opt for TVET programmes.

Table 5.1 Growth in government school numbers (1994-2004)

Year	Number of schools*	Number of students	Number of teachers**	Number of classes
1994/1995	1,084	418,807	14,938	11,817
1995/1996	1,070	447,822	16,810	12,524
1996/1997	1,113	481,678	18,858	13,623
1997/1998	1,175	516,160	21,186	14,729
1998/1999	1,230	549,404	22,695	15,633
1999/2000	1,289	586,777	24,318	16,541
2000/2001	1,343	621,285	26,173	17,338
2001/2002	1,406	653,650	28,015	18,279
2002/2003	1,490	686,507	29,930	19,381
2003/2004	1,577	711,541	31,858	20,382
2004/2005	1,659	733,735	33,398	21,292

* Schools with two shifts/one administration are considered as two separate schools
** 'Teachers' refers to all teaching and non-teaching staff in school, with the exception of janitors.
Source: MoEHE, 2004*b*.

School construction

When the Ministry took over government schools, they were in bad shape. A year after the PA's creation, the World Bank found a staggering 65 per cent of 1,031 MoEHE schools in need of rehabilitation or upgrading (1996: Annex 14). Double and triple shifts were commonplace in 1995-1996, being the case in more than 50 per cent of Gaza schools. Equipment was nearly non-existent and the quality of learning spaces was also poor, with many schools built and supplied before the 1967 occupation.

The MoEHE prioritized school construction and rehabilitation from day one. Fawaz Mujahed, MoEHE Director-General for Building and Projects, remembered the initial feeling that "we had a crisis on our hands", with expected increases in numbers of students, "double shifting, poor condition schools, and rented classrooms". While much has been accomplished since then in terms of construction, today the demand for school places continues to increase regularly by as much as 50,000 per year (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005). Current infrastructure plans indicate that, annually, 800 classrooms need to be built and 100 repaired to cope with the increase in pupils.

The MoEHE produced a school construction plan in 1995 based on surveys conducted by district offices. Funded completely by external donors, implementing this initial five-year construction and

rehabilitation plan would cost US$231 million (MoEHE, 1995). Much has been accomplished since then. Over 10,000 classrooms have been built in the last decade. In 2003 alone, a total of 1,476 classrooms were erected (World Bank, 2004). The majority of those interviewed for this study believed that school construction, along with the new curriculum, was one of the most important achievements of the Ministry. A Hebron district official explained the impact: "The additional schools have meant both more students and more space per student; we've got some schools that used to have more than 50 students per class, and they are now down to 20".

When new schools are built, the land may be government-owned, a religious endowment, privately-donated or municipal land. Educational Directorates are responsible for determining the location of the school. In the early days, the range of actors in construction meant that there were different visions for school design, with procurement following separate donor regulations. The MoEHE later took on the task of standardizing design and setting procurement procedures. However, central guidance only became available with the passage of the 2000 Palestinian Law for Procurement of Public Works.

The MoEHE does not currently allocate funds to school construction; all support comes from external sources. Newly-constructed schools are seen as a visible sign of development in local communities, and it is little surprise that this has often topped the list in requests to donors. A full range of donors have been involved in school construction over the years. The Department for Building and Projects highlights contributions of the EU, Germany, Islamic Development Bank, Italy, Japan, Norway, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, USA and the World Bank as all being significant.

While the MoEHE does manage some of the construction itself, a number of other implementing agencies have built constructed schools. PECDAR perhaps initially played the biggest role, as management of large infrastructure projects was the reason for which it was created. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) built a number of schools through NGO partners such as Save the Children, World Vision and Catholic Relief Services. Other donors felt more comfortable giving through a multilateral institution and UNDP was the main UN agency involved in building schools. They seem to have a particularly close relationship with the MoEHE, with one official

commenting: “We consider UNDP as our construction assistants in a way, otherwise we would have to expand our own capacity beyond what we could support”.

Construction has not depended exclusively on external sources, however. Throughout the OPT, Palestinians have donated land, buildings and equipment to the school system. The MoEHE estimates that perhaps 20 per cent of land and infrastructure support has come from the community. In one case, parents’ councils in Hebron have built around 70 schools. “A committee from the local community is formed to run the construction”, explained the district Director. “They take legal charge of land which is usually donated from the community, they raise funds, and oversee construction”. From 1994 to 1999, the value of community contributions to construction reached US$11 million (World Bank, 2001: 41).

Box 5. Education management information system (EMIS)

The Israeli military authorities did not turn over any education database when the PA took responsibility for education. This meant that there were major gaps in educational data for the first few years of operation. In 1995, the Ministry set up a planning department in view of implementing an EMIS, with support from UNICEF and funding from the EC and Sweden.

To start gathering reliable and generalizable education data, the MoEHE worked with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) to develop a database to international standards (Assaf, 1997). Pulling this together was not always easy. In the beginning, different parts of the Ministry wanted to collect data for their own purposes, which meant that data was fragmented and unsuitable for overall management. According to one official, it took over two years to unify information and convince MoEHE departments of the benefits of a centralized data system.

Today, the collection and reporting of data are required as a matter of course. At its most basic level, EMIS has provided a computerized system that tracks and records educational data. A system for tracking completion rates is set up with disaggregated statistics on the basis of age and gender. This has afforded some degree of insight as to which areas of the education system have needed urgent attention and thus facilitated the demands of policy decisions and emergency response (Sultana, 2002).

From a small team doing an assessment from school to school, there is now a huge construction unit in the Ministry. However, during the second *intifada*, construction has become increasingly decentralized. The engineering departments at the district education Directorates have taken on more responsibility. Unfortunately, there has been increasing need for repair work, as a number of schools have been shelled or in a few cases demolished.

Marginalized groups

Enrolment rates are generally high in Palestinian primary schools, with the MoEHE estimating that just under 2 per cent of students drop out. However, drop-out rates begin to increase from grades 7 and above, reaching their peak in grades 10 and 11 (MoEHE, 2004*a*). Kadumi and Abu Zeid (2003) cite the main reasons for the increasing dropouts as early marriage, difficulty with transport, the need to work, physical or psychological handicaps, and a lack of interest in learning.

Issues of inclusion are of course also important for these and other groups of marginalized children still in school. The MoEHE has made some special efforts towards building inclusion in schools – for girls, children with disabilities, and child labourers in particular. The sector Five-Year Plan seeks to facilitate greater access for these groups and others, such as children living in remote areas (MoEHE, 2000*b*). In interviews, one ministry official also spoke of the notion of inclusion as a means of creating institutions better able to cater for diversity.

Reaching girls

Nearly all Palestinian girls go to school. Annual enrolment has actually been slightly higher for females than for males (Fronk, Huntington and Chadwick, 1999). High gender equity is an area in which education has led to positive developmental impacts in OPT. Educated women get married later, are less likely to die in childbirth, have fewer children – though this effect is less pronounced in Palestine than is generally the case in other societies – and are more likely to be in paid employment.

Girls themselves believe education is important to their future, fearing that early marriage might interfere with their ability to complete school. One Palestinian girl expressed the fear shared by many: “Maybe I shall not continue my education; maybe I will get married at 15” (Save the Children, 2003: 14).

Nearly one third of the schools in the territory are co-educational. This type of school has been introduced in the younger grades in particular, so that each community can have a school where all students – boys or girls – could attend primary school locally. Furthermore, additional secondary schools were established in rural areas partly in order to reach more girls at this level of education. Construction targets are currently set at 70 per cent co-educational or girls' schools, according to one Ministry official, even though the community often requests schools for boys.

Lempinen and Repo claim that "girls do not appear to be discriminated against in most schools, but societal pressure[s] remain that prevent many girls from reaching their academic potential" (2002: 17). These pressures must also prevent some women from reaching their potential. When Rima Killany became the first woman in charge of a district – the Nablus Directorate – she did not have an easy time. When she initially met with village councils, they questioned whether she could take decisions and asked instead to meet her deputy. One community even thought that she was the secretary. She says this only increased her commitment to girls' education, and to ensuring that more female teachers were hired.

There have also been some attempts to improve gender equity in learning content. In 1999, a group of teachers looked at strengthening gender awareness in the curriculum. They made the following recommendations, to be considered during the curriculum development process:

- Encourage women authors to write curriculum books, having equal participation with males;
- When using illustrations, pictures depicting women should be equal in number to those of men;
- The images of women should not only reflect her as a housewife, ignoring the female as a productive member of society;
- Exercises should use verbs in both feminine and masculine conjugation;
- Texts should encourage students of both sexes to care for themselves and build respectful relationships;
- Patronising references towards women should be deleted; and
- When using feminine names of address, it is preferable to use the first name and not a familial sobriquet, e.g.: 'my aunt Fatma' is better than 'my aunt Om Qassem' (mother of Qassem).

(MoEHE, 1999)

Children with disabilities

Depending on the disability, children with special educational needs may be in local classrooms or accommodated at special schools. MoEHE figures show that over 2,500 pupils with special educational needs were enrolled in mainstream government schools in 2003 (Gumpel and Awartani, 2003). However, a majority of children are still not being served. Musleh and Taylor estimate that with the current population size, it is likely that "28,000 Palestinian children under the age of 15 suffer from some sort of disability" (2005: 15).

Of the MoEHE's 1,577 buildings, only 523 – about one third – are accessible to disabled children. Special schools include six schools for the blind, six for the hearing impaired and one for physically handicapped children (Musleh and Taylor, 2005). While special education experts are posted to districts, the MoEHE says few parents request special support for their children due to the stigma attached. A major obstacle to sufficient support is that few teachers' colleges offer courses in special education, and none award a specific degree for teaching children with special needs (Gumpel and Awartani, 2003).

From 1997 to 1999, the Ministry implemented a trial inclusive education programme for children in years 1-4 to prepare directorates to meet the needs of learners with disabilities in schools. This work has continued, with 229 schools having participated by 2003 (MoEHE, 2004*c*).

Working children

The issue of child labour has been given little attention in the Palestinian education system, as it has generally been thought that the group does not make up a large portion of Palestinian children. However, a recent survey found that 22,570 children work for a portion or all of every day. Of these, an average of 24 per cent are not attending school at all. Half of all working children are employed in agriculture, with others areas of work including quarries, hotels and construction (PCBC, 2004).

Palestinian working children face a vicious circle when it comes to schooling. They may have had to work for economic reasons, only occasionally missing classes at first, but then falling too far behind after time. Even so, 47 per cent of working children express a desire to return to school, according to the PCBS survey, with only 25 per cent preferring

to work only. It should be noted that the MoEHE sometimes works with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MoSA) to reintegrate children into school. If children have dropped out for only part of a year, they will be tested to see where extra help is needed. Often, however, children will have missed too much and need to repeat a year (Musleh and Taylor, 2005).

Early childhood education

Early childhood education has a strong history in the OPT. In 2004, 7 per cent of those eligible were enrolled in kindergartens (MoEHE, 2004*a*). As these latter began to be established in the 1980s, the sector grew. Asia Habash, long-time head of the ECRC, recalls that prior to and during the Oslo process, women's groups were the real leaders:

> "In the first intifada, women were taking an active role in picking up where the system was failing. They were forming women's groups, and trying to hold the society together when it was difficult for men to do so. These women's groups started to set up pre-schools, as there was no scope to influence the schools. It was seen as a way to improve Palestinian education, and the pre-schools were all academically-oriented."

Over the 10 years since the PA has been in place, the number of kindergartens has doubled from 436 to 950. Two thirds of these are located in the West Bank and one third in the Gaza Strip. Much of the growth in kindergartens has been in major cities, while rural areas and camps have had less provision (MoEHE, 2004*a*). The MoEHE is responsible for supervision of kindergartens (ages 3½ to 5½ years) with the MoSA responsible for nurseries (infants to 3½ years). Nearly all provision, however, continues to be through NGOs, the private sector, charitable and women's groups.

In 1994, the focus of the new Ministry was on basic education. Although the PLO had been a major supporter of these women's groups, when it transferred its attentions to creating the PA, pre-schools were low on the priority list. As explained by Jacqueline Sfeir of Bethlehem University: "The money shifted from the non-formal sector, kindergartens shrivelled for lack of funds, and many teachers lost their jobs". Private kindergartens and some supported by Islamic groups moved into the gaps.

Since then, early childhood education has seen growth and become fairly well developed; this has largely been at the initiative of NGOs

and private providers rather than that of the Ministry. Extensive teacher training programmes have been implemented, often through the leadership of the ECRC. The MoEHE itself trained about 300 kindergarten teachers and produced a basic curriculum that has been distributed to all licensed kindergartens.

Every district in West Bank and Gaza employs a kindergarten supervisor responsible for the licensing, supervision and support of kindergartens in their area. According to Maysoon Sailwadi, MoEHE Head of the Kindergarten division, this support includes some provision of toys and educational materials as well as promotion of nutrition and hygiene. The MoEHE itself runs four kindergartens in Nablus, Bethlehem and Gaza, and plans eventually to open one government kindergarten in each directorate. Beyond this, the Ministry wants to encourage the private sector in early childhood education and sees their role as mainly limited to legal and technical supervision.

Box 6. Beginnings of the Early Childhood Resource Centre

In 1985, Jacqueline Sfeir was one of the founders of the ECRC, and explains the start of the group's work to improve pre-schools.

"One day I visited a pre-school in Zababte, near Jenin. It was run through the Church. I went into a classroom full of 3 and 4 year-old children sitting on rows of hard benches. In front of the room was a blackboard, where there were rows of ant-sized words. The teacher thought she was helping the children with their reading; each letter was a different colour. But all the children wanted to do was escape.

When I asked what help was needed, the pre-school responded with a request for furniture. So I went back for a visit, and I sat and talked with the Father responsible for the pre-school. After several hours of discussion, he said to me: "You're not going to give us the furniture, are you?" I told him no, that the children did not need more benches to sit on.

Instead, I said I wanted to use his big hall to set up a different kind of pre-school and work with his teachers to help children learn to learn. He responded, "Show me." I took him down to the floor, and we fitted a puzzle together. It took some time to explain how play helps young children learn, but eventually I was allowed to work with the teachers, and to set up an early childhood learning centre – and there were no benches to be seen!

Traditionally, kindergartens have been academically-oriented. The ECRC's Asia Habash describes how they have tried to shift that approach: "We wanted to move away from the idea of a school. Early childhood centres are where children really have to play and learn, not be told to repeat". She explained that the training ECRC has provided attempted to shift how pre-school teachers see themselves. "Teachers are now more aware that kindergartens are not just about reading and writing. More children play, they sit on mats on the floors, and have corner activity centres".

Kindergarten attendance is not compulsory and has reportedly fallen since the second *intifada*. As kindergartens are not free, sending a child to kindergarten can represent a substantial economic burden on families. Children's security is also an issue, with parents reluctant to send their children too far. After the start of the second *intifada*, Save the Children found that "[s]ome mothers ... had to send their children to 'less developed and less progressive kindergartens' because these were closer to the house and therefore were deemed safer" (2003: 27).

Technical and vocational education and training

At the other end of the age spectrum rests vocational education. On handover in 1994, TVET was as run down as the rest of the system. What did exist was geared towards training low-skilled labour for the Israeli market, with "machinery and infrastructure [that were] at best, out-of-date and, at worst, obsolete" (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 7). At that time, TVET comprised only 4 per cent of formal secondary education (Sabri, 1997). In reality, TVET offerings have not grown greatly since then.

TVET tends to be delivered either through vocational schools or vocational units of two to four classrooms based in secondary schools. Courses include computer science, hotel management, fashion design, draughtsmanship, electrical engineering and agricultural science, among others. There are 20 vocational secondary schools, with 13 of these being part of the government system and the remainder private. Overall, these schools enrol approximately 2,200 students – 22 per cent female – in two-year programmes (World Bank, 2001: 88).

Attempts to further develop vocational education began in the mid-1990s, with the two education ministries – separated into basic and higher education – and the Department of Labour working together to develop a TVET strategy. Unions, chambers of commerce, youth groups and other government bodies such as the MoSA also participated as part of an 'expert team'. In 1998, a strategy was produced that focused on

developing a unified, modular and competence-based system. "[This strategy] offers clear directions for public policy and investment in TVET over the next 5-10 years, including expansion of the system" (Lempinen and Repo, 2002: 9).

The 'expert team' on TVET addressed a range of issues during its life span from 1995 to 2000. Mazen Hashweh, who worked with the Department of Labour on this project, remembers the team considered vocational specialities, physical infrastructure, curriculum development and teacher training. On reflection, he believes the plans for TVET were overly ambitious: "It is more successful to focus on small centres of excellence and scale up rather than try to deal with the whole system at once".

Donors have played an important role in the development of TVET, particularly the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, who supported planning at a central level. However, beyond this, most support has reportedly been for individual institutions or for specific functions, such as teacher training and library development. The World Bank comments that assistance for TVET "matches the fragmentation of the system as a whole" (2001: 88). Gaps in TVET offerings, according to one analysis, can be found in four respects:

(a) Politically, as a result of being affiliated to various agencies and lacking an integrative approach,
(b) Organizationally, due to staff employment policies which result in an over-representation of women in the lower administrative echelons ...,
(c) Economically, being 'almost non-functional' and disconnected from infrastructure and labour market needs; and
(d) Methodologically, as they lack any research-based approach, rendering [TVET] programs socially and gender insensitive.

(Lamis Abu-Nahleh cited in Mazawi, 2000: 374)

Attitudes towards TVET appear to also play a part in its slow growth. "In our society, vocational training is generally considered to be for those who have failed", explains Hisham Kuheil, MoEHE Deputy Minister for Higher Education. The TVET stream tends to be chosen as a "last resort" and one that "caters for low achieving students" (Sabri, 1997: 206). An academic focus is given higher status, perhaps because historically it has been more of a guarantor of success both in and outside the OPT. One vocational instructor illustrated the value placed on academic education:

> "I recently had a chance meeting with a former student, an elevator repairman. I stopped to chat with him briefly, and inquired on his profession and livelihood, which I had trained him for. The man told me that he enjoyed his work and was successful, making three times that of an annual teacher's salary. He then added: 'But I am going back to get my Bachelor's degree soon, so that I can get married'."

Although the 'expert team' pulled together strong plans, gloomy economic prospects and a lack of political will have kept achievements in the TVET area to a minimum. There has been slow roll out of the system and, in 2004, just 7 per cent of students were learning a vocation, far short of the MoEHE's 15 per cent target.

Lessons learnt

- *Education access issues are best tackled in a holistic manner, dealing both with quantitative and qualitative parts of the problem.* The approach of the MoEHE to access has been largely quantitative, with a focus on construction. More attention could be given to addressing high birth rates, addressing cost barriers and building acceptance of co-educational schooling.
- *Marginalized children are more likely to be excluded during a time of crisis, and the system should adapt to ensure inclusion.* In dealing with girls, the Ministry has taken a varied approach to inclusion; however, for children with disabilities and working children, focus has largely been on individuals with a few pilots looking at adapting the system.
- *Early childhood education, as a sub-sector outside of basic education, is less stable and more susceptible to funding shifts over the course of a crisis.* In OPT, with the MoEHE playing a supervisory role, sustainability of pre-schools has varied and progress in the sub-sector has largely been led by NGOs such as the ECRC.
- *While TVET can be a central contributor towards a viable economy, it is difficult to expand in the midst of an uncertain economy.* In OPT, efforts to implement an overarching strategy for TVET have largely failed, and attention has been directed at the macro level, rather than searching for small, replicable models.

Chapter 6

A new curriculum

Since 2000, a new Palestinian curriculum has progressively been introduced in schools to replace the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula previously used. Education stakeholders – students, teachers, Ministry officials and civil society alike – largely see this new curriculum as a major achievement. A young girl from Hebron interviewed for this study explained, "We feel proud and happy to have our own curriculum. It is addressed to us Palestinians!" An independent study reviewing the impact of the curriculum found that it has had a clear positive impact on "students' enthusiasm to learn" and to "teachers' commitment and sense of ownership" (Belgian Technical Cooperation, 2005: 42).

While most Palestinians praise the fact that there is a new curriculum, not all are as pleased with its contents and pedagogy. Many of those outside the territory share this sentiment, but in a slightly different way. Brown (2004: 195) describes the various views:

> "The Israeli government denounces it as hostile to peace, the Palestinian leadership regards it as undermining any sense of national identity, and many Palestinian educators regard it as outmoded and exhibiting the worst features of Arab educational systems."

A fair number of detractors – particularly those outside of the OPT – appear motivated by politics rather than real critique of the curriculum itself. Politics, and particularly the undefined nature of the Palestinian state, is something with which the curriculum developers have clearly struggled. The head of the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre, Salah Yaseen, feels that any approach would have been open to criticism. "In the early days we were hoping final status negotiations would make our job of dealing with history and geography a bit easier and give us something concrete to which to refer". This was not to be, yet curriculum development pushed ahead and the first new Palestinian textbook was in schools by 2000.

Early curriculum frameworks

Palestinians have long been dreaming of developing their own curriculum. During the first *intifada* in August 1990, a *Symposium on the Palestinian Curriculum for Fundamental Education* was convened at the

behest of the PLO and with the support of UNESCO. Its main outcome recommended “the establishment of a Palestinian Centre for Curriculum Development” (Lughod *et al.*, 1996). The drive to develop a Palestinian curriculum had begun.

After the PA took over in 1994, the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula continued to be used until the Palestinian curriculum was phased in between 2000 and 2006. The Jordanian and Egyptian curricula were both “similar in terms of their conceptual fragmentation and lack of systematic and Palestinian-oriented approach” (Mazawi, 2000: 373). They both used traditional pedagogy, with lecture being the basic method used for classroom interaction. There was little mention of Palestinian culture or geography in either set (Assaf, 1997).

In 1994, upon the creation of the MoEHE, there was an initial attempt to adapt the two curricula. Knowing that it would take time to actually develop Palestinian curriculum, a former MoEHE official remembered: “At first, we asked permission to cross out passages from the Jordanian textbooks, but they told us we could only use them as they were”. Schools therefore continued with the old textbooks for between six and 10 years after the PA was created.

Instead, an effort to develop supplementary materials was made in order to bring in Palestinian content. Known as the *Al-tarbiyya al-wataniyya*, or the National Education Series, there was one book for each grade: for grades 1-5 they were between 35 and 70 pages, for grades 6-10 they were no more than 10 pages. Attempting to provide materials closer to students’ daily lives, the booklets were reportedly awkward in their treatment of culture, history and geography. In them, the territory “was devoid of any political problems – there were no settlements or checkpoints, and refugee camps were simply ... normal places Palestinians might live” (Brown, 2001: 13).

In 1995, a formal centre for curriculum development was established. Ibrahim Abu Loughoud, a Birzeit University professor, led the team, which functioned independently of the Ministry. The centre was given one year to develop a plan for a Palestinian Curriculum, to be implemented in phases within five years. Ali Jarbawi, a colleague of Abu Loughoud, was on this team and remembers a shared “vision that curricular decisions should not be for educators alone”. To invite input, the team initiated a series of community meetings. They also spent time analyzing other curricula, among these the American, British, Dutch, Egyptian, Finnish, Kuwaiti, Lebanese and Norwegian.

The result, *A comprehensive plan for the development of the first Palestinian curriculum for general education*, was submitted in September 1996 to the MoEHE for review and approval. The report – 600 pages long – detailed the history of Palestinian concern for a national curriculum. Twelve technical studies on different curriculum subjects were included: accompanied by details of the proposed curriculum, teaching methodologies, and educational and technical aids (Abu Loughoud *et al.*, 1996).

The report criticized the content and pedagogy of the Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks in use and was quite damning of existing educational practices. The team questioned the relevance of the curriculum, which they saw as divorced from social reality. They wanted a completely new approach to education, and suggested what Brown has described as "the most radical reform proposed by an official body since universal education was introduced" (2003: 208). With many of the reform ideas coming from teachers themselves via the consultation process, there was a strong call for further participation in designing the curriculum.

This team's report was not well received by the MoEHE at the time, and was seen as a utopian and overly ambitious approach. Omar Abu-Hommos, brother of the then-deputy minister and current Dean of Al Quds University, contends that the plans were not practical and that the group wanted to adopt Western education systems. Key problem areas were a call for an extended school day and an end to student placement in literary and science specializations prior to secondary school. Moreover, the report advocated for the abolition of the *Tawjihi* exam.

The changes the Abu-Loughoud group desired – a pedagogical vision of innovation and reform – went too far for the educational leadership, which was otherwise occupied with rebuilding an entire education system. The plan was deemed both politically and practically unviable, and a decision was made to start again. The curriculum development centre was re-formed with new leadership and incorporated into the MoEHE so as to provide greater oversight on contents and structure. The second plan was developed in 1997 and submitted to the Palestine Legislative Council in March 1998 for political approval.

The revised plan focused not on pedagogy, but rather on practical administrative matters. In terms of substantive issues, changes included maintaining the requirement for the *Tawjihi* exam as the sole criterion for graduation, the nature of compulsory requirements and the role of the

MoEHE in making final decisions on the new curriculum. The differences in approach between the two teams was as "marked as the difference between a revolution and evolution", according to one observer. Yet their work did "show some unmistakable influence of the progressives" (Brown, 2001: 23). Subjects such as civic education were included, and a more active pedagogy was encouraged through the textbooks.

Textbooks and learning content

In 1998, writing started on the new syllabus, and quickly moved to textbook production. Overall, between 4,000 and 5,000 authors have worked on the new curriculum. The MoEHE pays the authors, with donors supporting the logistics of the writing, design and printing process. Each team of writers had seven to eight members, balanced to represent teachers and supervisors, residents of Gaza and the West Bank, and by gender.

Work on each of the books begins two years in advance of distribution. Writing of textbooks for grades 1 and 6 began in 1998 and were sent to classrooms in 2000. Other grades were completed in phases. In 2005, grades 11 and 12 were being finalized. The rationale behind phasing was partially based on the need to harmonize the West Bank and Gaza systems. The Egyptian curriculum was only 11 years, and effectively lacked a sixth grade; thus the decision to start with textbooks for that year first.

Table 6.1 Phased introduction of the new Palestinian curriculum

Phase	Target grade	Planned introduction	Actual introduction
Phase 1	Grades 1 and 6	2000	2000
Phase 2	Grades 2 and 7	2001	2001
Phase 3	Grades 3, 8, and 10	2002	2002 Grades 3 and 8 2004 Grade 10
Phase 4	Grades 4, 9, and 11	2003	2003 Grades 4 and 9 2005 Grade 11
Phase 5	Grades 5 and 12	2004	2004 Grades 5 and 10 2006 Grade 12

Source: MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 18.

Several officials from the curriculum centre comment that, on reflection, it may have been too ambitious to produce textbooks for two grade levels at once. Production schedules slipped over time, but nevertheless, a large number of books have been prepared. Since 2000, over 250 textbooks have been published, and currently 61 textbooks are in

production for grades 11 and 12. In the last five years, over 200 textbooks have been written, comprising over 25,000 educational pages.

According to its head: “Essentially the Palestinian Development Centre was set up as a homemade publishing company”. Initially, PECDAR took responsibility for textbook printing, but the MoEHE later took over the process and replicated procedures. Textbooks are free in government and UNRWA schools, but the MoEHE collects payment for textbooks from private institutions. Grades 1 through 6 textbooks are replaced annually, since they incorporate exercise books. For grades 7-10, the replacement rate is over a three-year cycle. Pupils from grades 11 and 12 buy their books and individuals sell back second-hand books. There are some who question whether the replacement rate is sustainable. “They can’t continue to produce new coloured textbooks every year”, said one donor, “it is ridiculously expensive, and there needs to be more initiative toward recycling the textbooks”.

Content and pedagogy

So what makes this new curriculum particularly Palestinian? The MoEHE describes its core contents as defined by national values, Islamic religion, national heritage, customs and traditions, and the Declaration of Independence (1998). Unlike the Jordanian and Egyptian curriculum, the new Palestinian curriculum includes subjects on civics education, technology, home economics and health and the environment. It also introduces English in first year, and encourages an elective third language in addition to Arabic and English.

The Palestinian context – both culturally and politically – makes inclusion of certain subjects difficult. There is surprisingly little attention paid to life skills education given the challenges of high population growth. “There is no space for us to teach children about reproductive health”, said one teacher. The school health programme is meant to cover these issues, but in reality rarely touches on the subject. Peace education is also sometimes pointed out as a gap in the curriculum. However, “some teachers voice doubt about teaching such issues as peace awareness or anti-violence” (Kvalbein and Smith, 2003: 25). A number of those interviewed for this study questioned whether peace education was worth teaching if its tenets of human rights and non-violence are constantly violated in children’s day-to-day lives.

Despite early hesitations around progressive pedagogy, compared to the Jordanian and Egyptian curriculum, “the texts make a tremendous effort to engage the student actively, encourage consideration of practical applications, and provoke further thought” (Brown, 2001: 23). Some mothers from Jenin say they have noticed that their younger daughters, who have been taught the new curriculum, participate at home more than their older siblings in problem solving and decision-making.

Box 7. Features of the new Palestinian curriculum

I. Lower Basic Phase (Grades 1-4):
- English has been introduced for the first time
- Civics is a new subject aimed at preparing a responsible citizen
- Free activity session has been introduced

II. Higher Basic Phase (Grades 5-10):
- Specialization is a basic feature in this stage
- Social sciences (history, geography and national education)
- Arabic (including reading, anthologies, grammar and composition)
- Technology and applied sciences
- Elective subjects including home economics, a third language, and health and the environment
- Four technical subjects are introduced at Grade 10

III. Secondary Phase (Grades 11-12):
Students are given the opportunity to develop their skills according to their desires and abilities. They decide to pursue either an academic education leading to higher education, or a vocational and technical education and training, either through formal technical education or through non-formal technical education, leading to participation in the labour market.”

Source: MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 18.

Even so, teachers are critical of the amount and difficulty of the material in the new curriculum. Focus groups for this study highlighted the fact that there is enormous pressure to complete the syllabus each year. One teacher explained: “There is so much information, and much of it is new to me as well, I have a very difficult time fitting it all in for the students”. Another teacher focused on lack of continuity: “What is taught in one grade may be ignored in the next, and the preceding information is not always available to students”.

Moreover, parents and students feel that the new curriculum is geared towards the more intelligent students, and not the average student. “It’s nice for us who are bright”, says one boy, “but some students simply sit in the class and do nothing”. A parent from Gaza highlighted the difficulties: “We used to be able to teach the old curriculum and help our children. Now we struggle to learn along with them”. These concerns about content and subject overload are “so widespread and emphatic that [they are] likely to have some substance” (Belgian Technical Cooperation, 2005: 42).

Schools are still seen as teacher- and book-centred, with students learning by rote and sitting exams to test recall. Critics of the new curriculum focus on this gap in pedagogy rather than the textbooks themselves. “Yes, the curriculum does offer teachers a new way to teach”, says Lamis Alimi, former head of education for UNRWA, “however, there has not been the kind of support teachers need to use the new methodologies properly”. Issa Saba of the Ca’anan Institute explained:

> “Teachers might be more activity-based in the first part of the year because of what they learnt in training, but in the last half of the year, when they realize they still have to finish two thirds of the book, all that is over.”

Charges of incitement ...

Much external criticism of the new curriculum has been focused on how ‘peaceful’ or ‘violent’ Palestinian children are taught to be, rather than typical curricular concerns. Outside of the OPT, allegations that the new textbooks have lead to incitement and teach violence against Israelis have received widespread attention. It seems that virtually all the charges of incitement can be traced back to one group, the Centre for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP). Founded in 1998, CMIP is based in Jerusalem, and sets itself the task of monitoring the content of school textbooks in the Middle East “to determine whether children are being taught to accept and recognize the right of the ‘other’ to exist” (see www.edume.org/). To date, the non-profit organization has published 10 reports, including a recent report on grades 5 and 10 textbooks in the Palestinian Authority, published in 2005.

In one of its first reports, CMIP claimed, “The new Palestinian textbooks refer explicitly to Jews and in very negative terms. This is done notably through a selection of quotes from the Koran. All these quotes

are particularly negative and offensive" (CMIP, 2001*a*: 3). Analysts such as Avenstrup, Brown and Moughrabi have all found the evidence used by CMIP to support its accusations to be characterized by inaccuracy and questionable interpretations of text. For example, the first CMIP report was based on a review of the old Jordanian and Egyptian textbooks rather than the new Palestinian curriculum. Not even one new textbook had been issued when the accusation cited above was made.

When this discrepancy came to light, a second CMIP report was issued the same year, which did acknowledge some positive progress in Palestinian curriculum development. However, it also claimed that "gaps continue to appear in the curriculum" and the centre has continued to attack perceived bias in the curriculum since then (CMIP, 2001*b*). Moughrabi emphasized that many of these attacks have used mistaken translations as evidence (2001*a*). One prominent textbook analyst who was interviewed for this study, Sami Adwan of Bethlehem University, cited examples where "the Arabic word *huriyah* was translated as 'liberation' rather than 'freedom'; in another case the curriculum's use of 'taken by force' was translated as 'rape'" by the critics. Other statements, although awkward, do not actively incite hatred. For instance, the sentence used in one textbook: "There are many cities in Palestine, the most famous of which is Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine", reflects one of the unresolved issues of the occupation (CMIP, 2001*a*: 37).

The CMIP's work has been widely circulated and cited, but not substantiated. Nonetheless, policy-makers have officially used its allegations in a US Senate subcommittee hearing and within the Political Committee of the European Parliament (Brown, 2003). Building on this political capital, the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon claimed that "the Palestinian textbooks [were] a greater threat than terrorism" (Avenstrup, 2004*b*). That said, not all Israelis are critical of the curriculum, with Ha'aretz newspaper writer Akiva Eldar stating: "The Palestinians are being rebuked where they should in fact be praised" (Moughrabi, 2001*a*: 2).

The implications of these allegations have been tremendous. As a direct result, donors have sometimes shifted funding away from curriculum development and textbook production.

> "In December 2000, faced with strong parliamentary pressure during an election campaign, the Italian government, referring directly to the CMIP study, informed the Palestinians that it can no longer

finance the development of the new Palestinian school curriculum. At the same time, the World Bank notified the Palestinian Ministry of Education that money allocated for the development of school texts and teacher training will have to be diverted to other projects. This rush to judgment has led to similar reactions by a number of other donor countries" (Moughrabi, 2001*b*: 2).

A recent donor review of the curriculum tried to put such claims in perspective. "In a situation where even factual information about historical Palestine is seen as a provocation, those so minded will interpret texts in as negative a light as possible" (Belgian Technical Cooperation, 2005: 45). The education system, like other sectors of society, has been left to cope with an unclear, unresolved and complex context – while the world is watching. Moughrabi suggests that "by focusing on what is included and excluded in school textbooks, these controversies serve as proxies for wider questions of power relations in society" (2001*b*: 6).

... or awkwardness?

While charges of incitement to anti-Semitism and violence against Israel can be largely dismissed, outside analysts and a number of internal critics still see curriculum content as somewhat awkward in relation to the conflict. Internal criticism comes from Palestinian intellectuals, educational specialists – many of who were educated abroad – and teachers. In particular, there has been debate on how current Palestinian history should be presented and taught "without having to engage in historical falsifications" (Moughrabi, 2001*b*: 7).

Omar Assaf asserts that children are taught a history that contradicts or ignores their families' own memories (2004). "I can believe in and work for a political solution", explained one activist, "but my grandfather is buried in what is now Israel, and I don't want my children to forget that". While these gaps and contradictions can be confusing for students, there is also a strong feeling that the Ministry has had little choice in avoiding certain subjects, as it is limited by political realities. In the textbooks, there is little mention of the Oslo Agreement, and no discussion on disputes, such as national borders, the status of Jerusalem and refugees' right to return. The books have avoided mentioning the issues that affect many Palestinian lives today: house demolitions, detention of prisoners and settlement expansion (Brown, 2003). And as one teacher pointed out, the curriculum focuses on Palestinian life in the territory, with there being "no mention of the millions in the Diaspora".

Moreover, some authors have used the opportunity to promote what was believed would soon become a Palestinian state. According to Brown: "The new 2000 and 2001 books have actually increased the emphasis on nationalism". In fact, the writers "inserted nationalist symbols in every conceivable location and illustration" (Brown, 2003: 222). Every school had a Palestinian flag flying, blackboards had nationalist slogans, and calligraphy exercises used phrases such as 'Jerusalem is in the heart of every Arab' (MoEHE, 2001: 22).

There is also tension over the role that religion should play in the curriculum, with the resulting text showing "signs of unresolved debates or uneasy compromises" (Brown, 2001: 23). Certain fundamentalist groups feel that Islamic religion should be the basis of education and criticize the curriculum as designed "to transfer Muslims into a secular people, that is atheists" (Liberation Movement Palestine, 2004: 9). On one side, the texts are seen to have negatively reinforced traditional gender roles; on the other, some believe that there should be more emphasis on proper Islamic behaviour and modesty in dress.

One official interviewed for this study says that he believes that curriculum must be inherently controversial: "It must be dynamic and reach a spectrum of people; yes there is difference in textbooks for civic education versus that of religious education, but I do not see this as a paradox". The wide authorship of the textbooks, drawing from a range of teachers, academics and community members familiar with a subject, has perhaps led to some of this tension. This diversity of writers within the Palestinian community has meant that different texts reflect different values. As a result, "[t]he outcome in textbooks is an uneasy compromise with something for everyone" (Brown, 2001: 23).

Assessment and the *Tawjihi*

Exams play an important role in the Palestinian education system, and the curriculum is largely geared towards preparation for testing. An emphasis on exams is inculcated throughout the school years, and culminates in the final year *Tawjihi* exam. The epitome of exams, the *Tawjihi* is legendary for its difficulty, with corresponding amounts of pressure on students. In the years leading up to this test, the system begins to prepare students through replicating tough and intricate marking systems.

> "Pupils' work [is] graded according to clear criteria determined officially in terms of the expectations of what children of a particular

> age can be expected to master from the skills prescribed by the official curriculum, using a precisely calibrated method, sometimes distinguishing even half marks. Teachers believe that differentiating pupils so precisely show high expectation and control over their performance." (Al-Ramahi and Davies, 2002: 69).

The *Tawjihi* is both the final exam of secondary school and the entrance exam to university. The exams in the West Bank and in Gaza have continued to be differentiated into those used in Jordan and Egypt. In 2006, when the new curriculum reaches the eleventh and twelfth grades, it is planned that the exam will then be revised and unified. A number of officials within the MoEHE claim that there would always need to be a *Tawjihi* exam, as that is what is done throughout the region.

There seems to have been little serious exploration of other assessment options. Ministry officials claim that the *Tawjihi* tests whether you have completed the curriculum, but not how well prepared you are with analytical skills for life or further education. Others describe the *Tawjihi*'s purpose as measuring information retention, to teach students to repeat. In focus groups, some parents indicated they would like to see the *Tawjihi* divided in two parts or cancelled altogether. Others suggested regular testing several times throughout the school year.

To prepare for the *Tawjihi*, many students take private lessons. One student described his experience: "You keep your face stuck in a book, there is a lot of psychological pressure on us, and in fact it makes me feel I'm in prison". A teacher says that she believes that "the *Tawjihi* has its own rituals: anxiety, then fear, and finally frantic fear. We see many of our highly motivated students change drastically when faced with the exam". This emotional stress seems to have grown worse under the second *intifada*.

While the MoEHE maintains that achievement levels on the *Tawjihi* have remained high throughout the occupation, there are suspicions that marking standards have been lowered in order to allow for the emotional stress of students. An official from the testing department explained that in 2001 instructions were given to exam writers to limit questions to information directly in the textbooks rather than less available supplementary materials. One group of parents interviewed claimed that during closures in their area, the MoEHE allowed students to repeat the test so all had a chance to pass.

The only other test that gives an indication of learning outcomes achieved by Palestinian students is the National Assessment Test (NAT). Meant to measure national rather than individual achievement, the NAT was first carried out in 1998 on grade 6 students in Arabic and mathematics. Further NATs in 1998, 1999 and 2000 showed low learning outcomes, especially in mathematics, Arabic, and science. In all tests, girls outperformed boys. In 2000, data showed results improving over the years for grade 4 pupils. This pupil cohort has grown up in a more stable environment than older children. The same tendency was not seen in sixth and tenth grade results (Al-Ramahi and Davies, 2002).

Since the second *intifada*, the NAT has not continued, and there are mixed messages as to whether student performance has suffered. An UNRWA study does show the occupation as causing a drop in student achievement, revealing "passing grades in Arabic and mathematics [to have] dropped by about 50 per cent in 2001 compared to 1999-2000 figures" (Save the Children, 2003: 22). Several years ago, the MoEHE instituted a no-fail system due to the *intifada*. In "government schools … there is policy dictating no more than five percent of any class can fail" (Lempinen and Repo, 2002: 4). Some teachers have commented that this has lowered achievement levels: "Students say to us, if I am passing anyway, why should I study?"

It is hoped that testing may improve as the Assessment and Evaluation Centre (AEC), part of the MoEHE, builds its influence. When the AEC was created, there were no qualified experts in assessment available locally, and extensive training was needed. Since then, all teachers have been trained in test development and classroom assessment using more progressive methods.

Lessons learnt

- *A national curriculum is a visible indicator of identity and plays an important role in building confidence in an education system.* The new Palestinian curriculum is widely seen as a major success, offering evidence of an ability to move forward, while still embodying ongoing debates facing the society.
- *In a fragmented territory lacking political consensus, formation of national curriculum can be a highly contested process*. Should it be reformist or conservative in approach? Ambitious or realistic? Religious or secular? The Palestinian curriculum, unable to answer definitively, attempts a balancing act.
- *Criticism of curriculum content is likely to reflect the wider political environment*. The Palestinian curriculum on the whole withstands the harsher accusations of those who claim it incites hatred; however, awkward in parts, it could arguably have done more to promote an understanding of the 'other'.
- *In a context of chronic crisis, traditional pedagogies and methods of assessment could be made more appropriate by actively engaging the learner*. Critics of Palestinian education say it does not do enough to promote active learning, with the *Tawjihi* being a classic example of testing of rote learning.

Chapter 7

Teacher development

Over the years, Palestinian teachers have shown dedication and resilience, coping with increasing class sizes, changes and uncertainty in curriculum, and the impact of the second *intifada* on both students and themselves. Teachers have endured changes in recruitment and accreditation, a piecemeal approach to in-service training, lack of consistency across pre-service training, and on top of all this relatively low salaries.

The education system currently employs some 46,000 teachers, a growth from 10,800 during the first days of PA administration. Every year 1,800 new teachers are recruited, and in 2003/2004 these were chosen from over 15,000 applications (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005). There is generally an oversupply of teachers, with some universities such as Al-Aqsa in Gaza and Open University turning out thousands of new teachers every year. It is not, therefore, a shortage of teachers that affects education quality, but rather the standard of teachers themselves.

Recruitment and qualifications

Recruitment of teachers under Israeli occupation was a murky business as far as most Palestinians were concerned. Officially, only teachers who had attended one of five government teacher training colleges and had earned their two-year diplomas were hired. But the reality was a bit different from the official stance. Under Israeli administration, teachers certainly were not chosen "on account of their teaching qualifications, as many didn't have any", according to Jihad Zakarni, MoEHE Director of General Education. Teachers were more often selected for their neutral political views – or just as likely, their discretion in voicing their real opinions. But neutrality was difficult to maintain, and as many as 1,600 teachers were removed during the period of the first *intifada*.

Post-Oslo, many teachers did not have a degree and no one seemed certain of criteria for hiring. In the early days of the PA, a system for recruitment needed to be developed. The process that evolved took several years to put in place and, like much of the recruitment that was taking place across the PA, there were accusations of favouritism and even nepotism in selection. Those at the MoEHE dispute these accusations,

with one official stating that: "Transparency was the clear message, and this was unique at the time; there were a lot of political assignments made in other areas, but not in education".

Regardless of this early reality, recruitment has since been addressed through implementation of a very formal selection process. The Education Directorate in each district recruits all needed teachers once every year. Applicants are given a written examination. Selected teachers are then ranked and assigned to schools in accordance with the school level, qualification and ranking.

During the first school year under the MoEHE, more than half of the male teachers and two thirds of the females had only an Associate Degree, which is comprised of two years of post-secondary schooling (MoEHE, 2003*a*). In 1998, the MoEHE revised the requirements so that, as a minimum, a qualified teacher had to hold a Bachelors degree. However, for subject areas with a teacher shortage such as mathematics and science, graduates in the subject continue to be hired without any teaching background at all.

The occupation has had a direct effect on education levels, particularly among new teachers. Jacqueline Sfeir, who has worked with the teacher training at Bethlehem University, gives the following profile:

> "Those who were in their first year of school during the beginning of the first *intifada* are now, if they have chosen to become teachers, likely to be in their fourth year of university. Their first five years of schooling were interrupted by repeated closures, sometimes up to several months or even years at a time. Then they had a period of relative stability, but just before their final *Tawjihi* exam, the second *intifada* began. Exams were delayed, and for the few years following, there have been regular interruptions to university life."

Support for teacher development once they have joined the profession is thus all the more important. School supervisors, at least theoretically if not in practice, have a role to play in this. In 1994, there were 185 supervisors in the OPT, with the number growing to 345 by 2002. Traditionally, supervisors have related to teachers and principals in a regulatory and control function. This has slowly shifted to a more supportive and developmental role, with the MoEHE reinforcing this approach by re-titling the position from inspector (*mufattishin*) to supervisor (*mushrifin*) (Brown, 2003: 216). However, according

to teachers interviewed, much of the traditional hierarchical and non-participatory approach to supervision remains entrenched.

Box 8. Role of school counsellors

The school counsellor programme was introduced in 1996 through the initial support of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). Two hundred counsellors were hired at first, and by 2005 the number had more than tripled to 670. Counsellors began by covering three schools each; now they are typically responsible for two, and 15 per cent cover one school only. There should be one counsellor for every 300 students, but with current resources, a counsellor may be responsible for as many as 2,000 students.

There is little history of the counselling profession in the Palestinian society and, prior to 1996, none within the schools. When school counsellors were first introduced there was misunderstanding over the difference between the job of a principal and that of a counsellor. Recruitment was also a major challenge, drawing from the few students who had graduated in psychology with, at most, one class on counselling.

Rima Killany of the MoEHE, who was responsible for roll out of the programme, remembers that initial and in-service training was crucial for the new counsellors. They were also key to setting up local referral points for critical cases, and to establishing co-operation with health and social affairs.

During the most recent *intifada*, school counsellors have played an important role in supporting students and their families. Zainab Alwazir, the Assistant Deputy Minister in Gaza, explained: “The counsellors have a heavy duty; during the recent several years of incursions, there were a number of cases of children being killed in the classroom in front of other children”. Counsellors received additional training as incursions and closures increased. Topics covered have included psychosocial issues, protection from violence, life skills and international humanitarian law. During the *intifada*, these counsellors have then conducted training on emergency and crisis interventions for teachers in the schools they support.

Teacher training

Approaches to teacher training have been relatively piecemeal during the decade under the PA. Under Israeli administration, in-service “teacher training was not a common phenomena [sic] and very few discrete training courses were offered” (Assaf, 1997: 53). Essentially,

there was no in-service teacher training for practising teachers for 27 years. In fact, the Israeli authorities actively prevented government teachers from attending courses offered by Palestinian universities and colleges (Khaldi and Wahbeh, 2000).

While in-service teacher training may have been somewhat incoherent, pre-service teacher training suffers from an equally disconnected approach. After 10 years, there are still no standards or co-ordination mechanism for higher education institutions engaged in teacher training. One MoEHE official suggests: "Our early assumption was that pre-service teacher training was fine; the urgent need was with the teachers already teaching who had had no training since they studied".

In-service teacher training

The first in-service training conducted after the Oslo Accords, according to Walid Hshaiyesh, who currently works with the recently established National Education and Training Institute (NETI), was for a group of about 30 supervisors selected from each of the districts. The training focused on teaching and learning pedagogy. The group then formed three teams and led short training sessions lasting a week for other supervisors in the Gaza Strip and the northern and southern West Bank. These supervisors then were responsible for training teachers in schools they covered.

This cascade training was meant to ensure that all Palestinian teachers received some training within the first year. According to one official involved, the initial strategy was to "just train everybody; the idea was to activate teachers, they had been still and quiet for so many years under the occupation". However, more than one critic outside of the MoEHE believes that at first "teacher training was just a symbol" and more an effort to build faith in the new authority than to improve teaching.

The in-service training that resulted was fragmented and delivered by a range of actors – MoEHE, NGOs and even donors (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005). Usually Ministry officials designed the training curriculum, which trainers then used to conduct their sessions. One teacher said: "The Ministry does mass training, but it is generally of poor quality. The NGO trainings are better, but they are not accredited so many teachers do not want to go". As time passed, the MoEHE became more open to working with NGOs on teacher training. For instance, the

Teacher Creativity Centre has trained around the new civic education curriculum.

The initial priority areas of training identified were pedagogy, assessment and administration. “At the beginning, we could not find enough teachers who had skills to train others”, remembers Agnes Hanania, an early MoEHE employee. “Most teachers teach the way they have been taught, so we are looking at modelling behavior that is decades old”. Over the years, teacher training became more diversified. Topics have included child-centred teaching and learning, lesson planning, subject integration and budget management.

From 1995 to 1998, the MoEHE trained 8,300 teachers and administrators. School principals were given special attention, receiving some 90 hours of training over that period (World Bank, 2001). From 1998 to 2004, all teachers received an average of just under one training session a year – typically a short course – in areas such as information technology, assessment and evaluation, and educational instruction (MoEHE, 2004*c*). In aggregating evaluations from teacher training in-service courses, around 90 per cent of more than 20,000 participants have been satisfied (Kvalbein and Smith, 2003).

In the late 1990s, the MoEHE began to take steps towards more decentralized training, with an initiative known as the school-based development unit. In this model, funds were given to schools, and then teachers and the principal together would decide what topic they needed training on. The MoEHE gave administrative support and offered to organize the training. Since 1999, under this scheme schools have received a US$500 budget per year for their own training (Kvalbein and Smith, 2003).

The most extensive effort on in-service teacher training has been connected to the introduction of the new curriculum. Once again, what is essentially a cascade system of training was used. When new textbooks were released, an in-service training of trainers took place, usually in summer months for one to two weeks. These teacher trainers then fanned out to reach a cluster of schools, including both those under the authority of the PA and under UNRWA. An average teacher typically has three to five days training to become familiar with and teach the new textbooks, which many feel is not enough. One teacher commented: “How can this training be adequate? A teacher knows the material by heart in thirty

years with the same curriculum. Can we teach with the same authority after a week with a totally new textbook?"

The large range of training courses and lack of overall direction have increasingly become a concern. According to Costanza Farina of UNESCO, donors are currently worried about the "lack of a coherent plan around teacher training", and have become less willing to fund separate training initiatives. She explains that over the past decade, teacher training has "been treated in a very fragmented way, and not at all in depth". The training department within the MoEHE has been carrying the overall responsibility for in-service training, which it now shares with the new residential NETI opened in February 2005. NETI says that they are now putting together skill set profiles for different teaching and administrative positions, and from that will develop a comprehensive teacher training plan.

Pre-service teacher training

Eleven universities and 25 community colleges in the OPT offer teacher training, with 130,000 students specializing in teaching. These institutions "prepare teachers in often quite different ways" to the extent that "a special in-service programme is delivered each year for newly recruited teachers in order to ensure that they are minimally prepared for work in the classroom" (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 11). This implies that 'trained' teachers are actually not minimally prepared for teaching.

Academic training takes the form, in most cases, of a Bachelor's degree in education as a class teacher for the elementary grades, or as a subject teacher for preparatory and secondary grades. A number of institutions also offer a one-year teaching certificate for those who already have a Bachelor's degree. For pre-service teacher training, each university has its own curriculum. The MoEHE does not have central authority, as the universities are autonomous. Any oversight needs to happen through co-ordination rather than imposition. Maher Hashweh, professor of education at Birzeit University, adds that "there is no system of quality assurance, teachers from one institution cannot be compared to those from another".

The emphasis across most teacher training programmes seems to be on theory rather than practice. The World Bank has found that in pre-service teacher training "there is inadequate emphasis on the practicum experience [and that] even teaching methods courses can be unduly academic" (2001: 82). Several years ago, the Qattan Centre attempted

an assessment of pre-service educational training programmes. Their conclusions about the weaknesses of the sector were summarized as follows:

- What is offered in pre-service training programmes is removed from the reality of schools
- No coherence in the pedagogical philosophy between university professors, who present these programmes, and the MoEHE;
- No connection or co-ordination among education professors themselves, and between them and the schools

(Moughrabi, 2001*b*: 4)

In the late 1990s, the quality assurance unit within the Department of Higher Education started a co-ordination process between pre-service teacher training institutions. Described by Tafeeda Jarbawi of Al Tiri, a women's teacher training college, "there have been only fragmented efforts to bring together pre-service teacher training. In 1998, there was a series of workshops on standardizing the curriculum, with a series of papers drafted, but no follow-up".

Part of this failure may have resulted from larger tensions around centralization and reluctance by independent universities to fall in line under the central MoEHE authority. One teacher training professor claims the co-ordination effort fell apart to a certain extent when guidelines were unilaterally issued by the MoEHE in 2004. Universities objected to its unilateral nature and, as there was little enforcement, continued to do as they chose.

Pay and compensation

Concerns about teacher pay and status pre-date the PA and have continued under its leadership. Under the Israelis, "employment conditions were not clearly defined and employment regulations, rights, and responsibilities were never clarified. This resulted in a high degree of frustration and job dissatisfaction among teachers" (Assaf, 1997: 53). Salaries were also extremely low. Because it was impossible to manage on the meagre salary, many teachers took second jobs, until this was prevented by an Israeli decree in 1983 (Graham-Brown, 1984).

In 1994 when the PA took over, an immediate decision was made to raise public sector salaries, including those of teachers, by 20 per cent. Due to inflation, the effects of that raise lasted only a few years. In reality, the MoEHE has little direct control over teachers' salaries as they form

part of the civil service; however they do represent PA authority over education. The resulting friction, between the PA and the MoEHE on one side and the teachers' unions on the other, is "frequent and sometimes led to detrimental developments and ... reached dangerous situations" (Velloso de Santisteban, 2002: 153).

When the PA took control of education in 1994, teachers were organized into several negotiating blocks. Under Israeli administration, unions were banned, but in the 1980s teachers began to form local 'co-ordinating committees' and set up an umbrella group called the Higher Coordinating Committee. By 1990, a group of teachers felt there was political space enough to establish a union, forming the General Union for Palestinian Teachers in the Occupied Territories (GUPTOT). Also entering the scene was the PLO-supported General Union of Palestinian Teachers (GUPT), which had operated in UNRWA schools outside the West Bank and Gaza (Brown, 2003).

From 1996 to 2000, there was a series of teachers' strikes, some of them stemming from friction and rivalry between the teacher unions themselves (Brown, 2003). Strikes would last for as long as three or four months, with teachers claiming that steady inflation had dramatically reduced their wages. However, one union organizer stressed that "these strikes were not just for money, but also issues with the bureaucracy and lack of accountability of the system". In 1997, a memorandum was presented demanding higher wages, improvements in the retirement system, additional benefits for families, and support for teachers that were fired for 'security reasons' during the Israeli occupation (Brown, 2003). In reaction, the MoEHE dismissed as many as 18 teachers and had them face punitive measures (Assaf, O., 2004). Throughout the series of strikes, the MoEHE responded:

> "with several harsh and punitive measures: firing of the most active teachers and transferring of some of the others from their usual schools to schools far away from their homes. In an extreme case, one of the leaders of the teacher movement [was] held incommunicado in detention" (Velloso de Santisteban, 2002: 153).

The committees had planned to intensify the strikes around the start of the second *intifada*, but as a new wave of violence and closures spread through the territory, the teachers' movement froze its activities for what was meant to be a temporary period.

Most officials from the MoEHE had little to say on their relation with teachers' unions. However, one MoEHE employee expressed the frustration that seemed to be underlying other discussions. He criticized the teachers' movement, saying they are only ever active in a crisis. "They lack capacity for a greater institutional role and engagement in educational issues".

Today, the situation for teachers has seen little improvement. In government schools, the average monthly salary is just US$350. It is generally felt that "teacher salaries do not encourage the educated and energetic to join the teaching profession" (Lempinen and Repo, 2002: 17). Every two years the salaries are meant to increase, but this has not happened in recent years.

Many community members sympathize with the teachers. One individual commented: "You started to hear teachers saying the proverb, *ala qad masarifcum bashterel*, or 'I work, the same amount they give me', and see many taking on other jobs to make ends meet". Another added: "When teachers are paid only NIS 2,000 a month, what can be expected? Teachers have to take on other jobs, like being a taxi driver, to make a living". These extra jobs affect the classroom, as there is then little time for in-service training or additional classroom preparation (Van Dyke and Randall, 2002).

Lessons learnt

- *Having an individual in a school who is trained and responsible for counselling can provide significant support to students living in conflict-affected environments*. Palestinian students and their teachers regularly cite the role of school counsellor as important to psychosocial care.
- *Rapid teacher training can 'activate' teachers following a crisis; however, separate initiatives should link to wider teacher training plans*. In OPT, both in-service and pre-service teacher training have been implemented in a fragmented manner, focused on delivery of separate courses rather than being built around on a comprehensive skill set for teachers.
- *While teacher wage concerns might be suspended as a conflict becomes more active, to overlook these calls has ongoing impact on teacher motivation*. While teacher dissent and harsh PA reaction to union activity have not been frequent since the second *intifada*, the issues have not gone away and are likely to re-emerge in time.

Chapter 8

Occupation renewed

On 29 September 2000, a second Palestinian uprising broke out. Its immediate impetus was the visit of Israeli politician Ariel Sharon to the disputed Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif, which is the site of the *Al-Aqsa* mosque. The second *intifada* is thus sometimes known as the *Al-Aqsa intifada*. The Israeli response, in the form of tightened security and harsh controls, has had profound effects on Palestinian children's lives and basic services like education.

Most Palestinians' living situation had actually deteriorated during the implementation of the Oslo Accords. Security was increasingly managed through roadblocks and checkpoints, a large amount of land continued to be lost to settlement expansion, and economic hardship was on the increase. The political environment in summer 2000 was dominated by the failure at Camp David, a key summit, which was seen by many Palestinians to represent a failure of the Oslo peace process as a whole. There are a number of perspectives one might take in understanding the cause of the second *intifada* and subsequent strengthening of the Israeli occupation. Lochery (2005) identifies several differing perspectives in explaining the failure of the peace process after Oslo.

The first view is that Arafat was never really interested in peace. Supported by the Israeli right, this account blames Arafat for rejection of concessions offered during the Camp David summit, and claims he was happy to return to a strategy of violence to achieve further gains. The major criticism is that Arafat and the PA were neither willing nor able to do enough to fight terrorism.

A second account – held in many foreign circles – puts greater blame on the domestic climate in both Israel and the OPT. Agreements made during the Oslo process were often interpreted differently on each side to suit domestic constituencies. This version claims that Israeli leadership in the late 1990s supported settlements, as it was more interested in domestic support than in furthering the peace process. Likewise, Arafat's actions, including rejection of the Camp David concessions, were seen to have been due to his desire for domestic political survival.

The most common perception held by Palestinians, however, is that the failure of Oslo was due to domination by Israeli security concerns.

This meant core issues of statehood and the right of return for Palestinian refugees were never really addressed. A small group of Palestinians go further in the blame, and see the PA as collaborators, who essentially "line[d] their own pockets with the silver and gold that came their way in the form of international aid" (Lochery, 2005: 182).

In 1993, when the Oslo Accords were first signed, more than two thirds of the Palestinian people supported it. By the end of the decade, only one tenth believed that its promise offered hope of an end to the occupation (Shikaki, 2002). This disillusionment led some among the Palestinians to turn to violence. Militant groups have made sure that the threat of suicide attacks became increasingly real for the average Israeli. Since 2000, half of all Israelis killed by Palestinians were victims of suicide bombings. Mortality figures have also grown; according to the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), in 2000, 85 Israelis were killed; in 2002, the number peaked at 220 (Lochery, 2005). Believing that Arafat and his senior leadership did little to control the violence, "Israel held not simply the militant groups but the [PA] as a whole responsible" (Brown, 2003: 246).

Harsh Israeli countermeasures have affected all Palestinians rather than just the few who perpetrated violence. Many Palestinians began to feel that whatever the rhetoric, Israel would never allow the creation of a Palestinian state. Security concerns led to the closure of the OPT for long periods, with a further weakening of the Palestinian economic position. Early in the *intifada* just one day of severe closure cost the Palestinian economy US$8 million (UNSCO, 2000).

Israeli actions have included incursions into Palestinian controlled areas, closures and checkpoints to restrict movement, and curfews that completely shut down cities. The construction of settlements and demolition of Palestinian homes and businesses has also continued. Arafat and his senior aids were imprisoned for some time in the presidential compound in Ramallah, the *Muqata'ah*, exacerbating a crisis in Palestinian leadership. In addition, the 'separation' Wall is being built between Palestinian and Israeli settled areas to further control movement.

While these measures do not show that Israel is trying to sabotage Palestinian education *per se*, there has still been a marked effect on the sector. These indirect actions pose a different kind of challenge to the education system, as harsh controls and destruction can not be avoided

by teaching about peace or simply by 'stopping the incitement'. If the root causes of the conflict were internal to education, improved policy and practice could do something about them. However, if, as they appear to be, the actions are essentially external to the system, all Palestinian educationalists have been able to do was prepare for and mitigate the consequences.

Education besieged

By 2000, the PA already had much to be proud of in the education sector: a working system, extensive school construction and a new Palestinian curriculum. However, the renewed occupation and its attendant violence have meant an end to much of that positive momentum. Extensive human rights violations inevitably have impacted on educational access and quality. The UN Special Rapporteur's 2005 Report on the Right to Education stated "military occupations are another appreciable curb on the human right to education, the most egregious example being the Israeli-Palestinian conflict" (Muñoz Villalobos, 2004: 23).

The Israeli response to the *intifada* has led to immeasurable costs to the education system. Damage to infrastructure alone, caused by the Israel Defence Forces actions, totalled more than US$5 million (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005). In 2002, classroom construction reached only 50 per cent of the target set due to movement and funding constraints (World Bank, 2003*b*). The human cost has also been great. Palestinian students and educators have had to cope with repeated rights violations, negative psychosocial impact and pervasive violence in their lives. In this context, the resilience of the system itself has been rather remarkable. Brown characterizes the system as "disrupted" but not "destroyed", with "the work of the post-1993 period showing far more staying power than might have been expected" (2003: 252).

Access to education has been affected by movement restrictions and the declining economy. From the start of the second *intifada*, net enrolment rates in basic education dropped from a peak of 92 per cent in 1999/2000 to 88.4 per cent during the 2003/2004 school year. Secondary enrolment, however, actually improved from 45 to 49 per cent, perhaps building on the strong enrolment increases in basic education of the 1990s (MoPIC, 2005*a*). At both levels, the gross numbers of children enrolled have continued to climb due to population growth. The exception to this growth is among boys in grades 7 to 9, where drop-outs have almost tripled, possibly as this group has taken on more responsibility towards

family income (UN, 2005). Similarly, there has been a reversal of previous steady enrolment increases in kindergardens, with a 14 per cent drop in enrolment between 1999/2000 and 2003/2004 (MoEHE, 2004*a*).

While the effects of the occupation on education quality are difficult to measure, there is clear cause for concern. A study across six districts found that "teachers and administrators overwhelmingly believed that the quality of education they could provide was being eroded" (Save the Children, 2003: 24). Holding teacher training has progressively become difficult, with regular challenges of checkpoints and closures. Greater reliance on district trainers has helped, but officials report problems due to limited support and oversight. The World Bank (2003*b*) claims that children's exam results declined in the 2000/2001 academic year.

The consequences of stress and emotional damage to students and teachers are real, but hard to measure. Some sense of their severity can be found in a study carried out by the Secretariat for the National Plan of Action for Palestinian Children (NPA). It found that, among some 1,200 children surveyed, "half of the children (48 per cent) have personally experienced violence owing to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict or witnessed violence … befalling an immediate family member". More than one fifth "have had to move out of their homes, temporarily or permanently, overwhelmingly for conflict related reasons" (Arafat, 2003: 5).

Security control and violations

Throughout the OPT, pockets of Palestinian-controlled land are surrounded by Israeli settlements, with bypass roads connecting settlements to each other and to Israel. Checkpoints are erected to regulate movement in and out of the fragments of Palestinian controlled areas. At checkpoints, often after long waiting periods, Israeli soldiers are given discretion to allow Palestinians through or turn them back. This control enables the military to impose closures, which essentially close checkpoints and halt movement. Curfews take this one step further and shut down movement in a city. In 2002, Israel decided to build a wall in order to prevent Palestinians from illegally entering Israel. In violation of a ruling by the International Court of Justice, this wall is being partially built within the 1949 Armistice Line, twisting through the West Bank, enclosing 160,000 Palestinians either in wall-surrounded enclaves or on the 'Israeli' side of the wall, and severely limited the daily movement of half a million Palestinian people (UN, 2003).

During 2004, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that 61 checkpoints, 6 partial checkpoints, 102 roadblocks, 374 earth mounds, 28 earth walls, 48 road gates, 61 trenches and 39 observation towers could be found in the West Bank. In the Gaza Strip there were a further 5 checkpoints, 9 roadblocks, 12 earth mounds, 10 road gates, 46 military posts and 67 observation towers (Al-Haq, 2005). The ubiquitous boundaries of the OPT leave 275 schools within 500 metres of an Israeli military post (Sfeir and Bertoni, 2003). These schools are particularly vulnerable, as “the military positions that implement closures generate violence” (Save the Children, 2002: 10).

Statistics citing the human cost of the occupation are pervasive in Palestinian writing. Numbers sometimes vary, probably due to reporting on a different range of dates or for differing age cohorts. For example, Defence for Children International (DCI) Palestine (2005) reports that 703 children were killed from the beginning of the current *intifada* in late September 2000 through to 10 May 2005, versus the 450 cited by the MoEHE in the table below. The MoDEDA (2005) claims that approximately 3,000 children have been arrested and detained since September 2000, versus the MoEHE-reported 542. Whatever their exactness, the human cost has been significant.

Table 8.1 Deaths, detentions and injuries of students and teachers (2000-2005)

Category of victim	**Type of suffering**			**Totals**
	Killed	**Detained**	**Injured**	
Teachers	27	167	53	247
School students	450	542	3,354	4,346
University students	195	710	1,245	2,150
Other employees	7	29	12	48
Totals	**679**	**1,448**	**4,664**	**6,791**

Source: MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005.

Damage to and occupation of educational buildings has also been extensive. MoPIC details 295 schools as damaged by Israeli military actions, with nine completely destroyed and 15 others forced to close (2005). The MoEHE reports that 43 schools have at some point been occupied and turned into Israeli military bases. In April 2002, the Ministry building in Ramallah was occupied by the Israeli military. Equipment and records were confiscated and considerable damage was sustained to the building itself (MoEHE, 2005).

Box 9. Testimony of an attack on a school

[T]wo military jeeps passed by the school and there were not any confrontations. Then suddenly from the two jeeps a gas canister was thrown at the first classroom. A soldier got out of the jeep and threw that canister through the window of the classroom. The students would have suffocated but for the teachers' efforts, which helped the small children of six years old.

Affidavit No. 87/2001 given by teacher in al-Zir Basic School for Boys, Hebron Governorate

Source: Al-Haq, 2005: 7

Disruption of schools has also been an issue, although the extent differs depending on location. Strict curfews in Nablus and Jenin – 42 and 48 days respectively – meant that more than 500 teachers regularly could not reach their schools during school year 2003/2004. The same year, Hebron had 180 days of curfew (Save the Children, 2004). During 2003, 1,289 schools were closed across the OPT for three consecutive weeks. UNICEF (2004) claimed that in 2004 throughout the OPT over "226,000 children in 580 schools [found] going to school impossible, irregular or very risky". There have also been sharp declines in teacher attendance, as teachers often live on the other side of checkpoints or outside closed areas. One study found that in the first year of the *intifada* "the average lost days of work per school to be 23 days per school" (Giacaman *et al.*, 2002).

Occasionally restrictions have meant staying in school, rather than going home. For instance, Jenin experienced rather violent incursions during 2003. One mother described the time; "In Jenin Camp we saw the water fill with blood, so our girls stayed at the school for several weeks, they were so scared to come home". In another case near Ramallah, 17 students coming from nearby villages could not get back home because of a sudden blockade; they remained at school for one week, under the care of school administration (Giacaman *et al.*, 2002).

The occupation has of course also affected the all-important *Tawjihi*. Checkpoints have slowed down the delivery of the tests; in fact in 2001, some *Tawjihi* exams were reportedly delivered on donkeys in order to get past checkpoints. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has taken on delivery of the tests to districts when MoEHE movements have been particularly restricted. In 2002, a major military campaign

overlapped with the test, "forcing students to wait until the Israeli army withdrew to finish the most important educational examination of their lives" (Brown, 2003: 247). Save the Children highlights the fear often sparked by the combination of the occupation and the *Tawjihi*:

> "One day when we were in school taking exams, there was curfew and when the (Israeli) army went into the school our hearts beat fast and we were scared, they threw tear-gas but thank God we survived" (Save the Children, 2004: 4).

With the construction of the separation wall, a number of students and teachers must also pass through gates to get to school, "particularly in the districts of Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqilya, Salfit, Ramallah, Jerusalem and Bethlehem" (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005: 3). In several places, school days have been shortened because of gate opening times (UN, 2005). While less than 1 per cent of children have claimed they dropped out directly as a result of the wall, a PCBS survey found that a quarter of those were dropping out due to poverty, "to which the Wall is likely to have been a significant contributing factor" (PCBS, 2004).

Box 10. The wall, education and coping strategies

How students deal with the physical barrier	
Students using alternative roads	48.1%
Changing schools	16.5%
Changing place of residence	4.5%
Absent from school due to closure	77.6%
Using permits/special co-ordination	11.0%
Enrolled in other local branch	3.4%
Other	4.5%
How students deal with economic hardship due to the barrier	
Borrowed money	66.7%
Received assistance	18.5%
Used their savings	35.2%
Work	32.9%
Other	10.1%

Source: PCBS, 2004.

Psychosocial impact

The incursions of the second *intifada* have undoubtedly had an impact on children's mental and emotional well-being. While nearly half

of children have directly experienced violence, more than 90 per cent report "not feeling safe and exposed to attack" (Arafat, 2003: 5). A focus group of parents for this study noted that the vocabulary of one-year-old children often includes words like 'soldier' and 'shooting'. They also told a story of a young child who insisted on sleeping under the bed for nearly three years because he was afraid of the shelling. A girl from Jenin, interviewed for this study, described her own recent fears:

> "Then there were rockets, a house was demolished right in front of us, and everything was torn to pieces. We would be in our homes and hear the rockets overhead, and would sit, counting and listening to the sounds, at any moment expecting our own house to explode. Then the explosion would sound in some other part of the city. After days at home, we used to hear what was happening in Jenin from our relatives in the USA who were watching the news."

It is not just the violence that affects children, but also the daily process of dealing with checkpoints. These often involve long waits or elaborate manoeuvres. According to one child:

> "Once I was walking with some friends to school, I saw soldiers so I was scared, and my friends too, so we went from street to street because we want to get education" (Save the Children, 2004: 4).

Boredom due to stringent safety restrictions and movement controls adds additional stress to children's lives. The Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict emphasizes that "boredom causes violence and aggression against younger children in the family and neighbourhood" (2002: 9). Moreover, the wall clearly causes major stress to those who live near it.

> "Children were asked to write down words that describe the Wall. The most common word children used to describe the Wall was 'a prison'. One child described it as "a snake that spreads its poison" reflecting the way the Wall twists through farmland to encircle the village. Other common terms included images of fear, death and sadness, for example 'It destroyed our lives', it is 'a deadly barrier,' and 'it breaks my heart'" (Save the Children, 2004: 10).

Research on resilience shows that most children handle low levels of risk rather well; it is when risk accumulates that a child's development is jeopardized (Boothby, 1996; Bracken and Petty, 1998). Arafat, in the NPA study, claims that, "the West Bank and Gaza represent such an

environment where risk factors accumulate for young people" (2003: 9). Reports cite all sorts of symptoms among students. The Watchlist found increases in sleeping and eating disorders, concentration problems, crying, feelings of hopelessness and preoccupation with death among children in the OPT (2002). In the NPA study, 90 per cent of parents reported children having "symptomatic traumatic behaviour" including nightmares, bedwetting, aggressiveness, hyperactivity and decreased attention span (Arafat, 2003: 6).

During a focus group for this study, a child from Hebron explained that he thought play was irrelevant during these trying times. Another added that games were no fun when he knew his mother was waiting at the checkpoint for hours every afternoon. A mother from Ramallah, when asked about this phenomenon, said: "How can you teach your children to take initiative, to be active, when there is so little they can control?" Among children consulted, there was a belief that girls and boys were affected differently by the occupation. A focus group in Gaza said that "boys are kept home due to risk of violence or harassment while with girls this is due to family and social constraints".

The lack of control experienced by children is compounded by the sense that parents cannot necessarily keep them safe. More than half of children share this feeling (Arafat, 2003). It is not unusual for parents to focus on "the lack of power they have to protect children ... If you lack something, you can never offer it" (Save the Children, 2004: 21). Of course, teachers and other caregivers are themselves frustrated with their lack of control. Qaimari notes that teachers "constantly made reference to their individual instability and conflict trauma" (2004: 3). As one teacher described: "I arrive at school already tired, sweaty in the summer and muddy in the winter. I keep thinking about the road back and how it will be" (Save the Children, 2003: 23).

Despite what seems a bleak situation, children continue to struggle to feel positive about what life holds in store. Palestinian children say that in order to cope with the occupation they try to develop traits to keep them safe, focus on personal improvement and strengthen their relationships. In their own words this means:

- "Being kind-hearted, helpful, educated, brave, strong, clever, and self-dependent;
- "Working on interests such as singing, swimming, karate, becoming a pilot, or a general eagerness to learn;

- "Being sociable, beloved, popular in the classroom, having friends or being patriotic" (Save the Children 2004: 21).

The vast majority of children, 96 per cent, believe that education is the "main means to improve their situation, both presently and in the future" (Arafat, 2003: 6).

Coping strategies

Regular violations and movement restrictions have limited the MoEHE's ability to function since it was formed. Since the start of the second *intifada*, increased restrictions on movement of personnel, reduction of state revenues and extensive damage to infrastructure have meant the PA as a whole, and the MoEHE in particular, have been increasingly unable to meet their obligations. Yet widespread impact has meant that need for support has been even greater for most schools, children and communities.

The MoEHE has only just managed to maintain a functioning system with the support of external funds. While the Ministry struggled to focus on developmental needs, they were pulled back at every turn and reminded that the *intifada* was, in fact, an emergency. Even former Minister of Education Naim Abu-Hommos admits: "Much of the focus of recent years has gone toward protecting the system". Sfeir and Bertoni paint a vivid picture of this struggle (2003: 4):

> "Daily challenges, such as going to work and returning home (though the journey may take two hours more than it had before a closure) or 'finishing' Unit Six of the science textbook before Tuesday, have become typical goals of Palestinians because they can sometimes still be accomplished … Larger struggles, such as opening the closed road, or ensuring that science students understand the concepts within the textbook's information, have been abandoned long ago because they seem futile within the current power structures."

Maintenance, not progress

The overwhelming priority of the MoEHE in recent years has been to keep schools running at all costs. As such, the *intifada* forced a change to the priorities and progress of the five-year plan. A committee for emergencies was set up by the Ministry in early 2001, with an aim to (1) establish an emergency fund to cover operating cost deficit; (2) rehabilitate and protect schools near flashpoints; (3) strengthen

counselling and remedial education; and (4) provide first aid and fire equipment to schools (Lempinen and Repo, 2002).

Donors claim they wanted to support the MoEHE to address emergency needs while keeping an eye towards longer-term development. According to one donor, however, during the first year of the *intifada* the Ministry focused on support for operating costs such as electricity, phones, and operation of cars. "Yes, there was bad news every day, but essentially the MoEHE locked its doors and focused on keeping the system going. There was little acknowledgement of a decrease in quality, which would actually have helped us know how to better engage". A year or two into the second *intifada*, requests began to come from the Ministry to support psychosocial care and preparedness for schools.

Following the start of the *intifada*, the PA's revenue declined, leading to government spending being cut. This partly followed a fiscal crisis in 2000, when Israel began withholding tax revenues collected on behalf of the PA. Donors largely came to the rescue.

> "In 2003, when the MoEHE suffered cutbacks in allocations from the Ministry of Finance, donors stepped up. Of the US$14.2 million budgeted for non-salary operating costs, the Ministry of Finance was able to provide only US$2.7 million. Donors more than covered the shortfall, providing budgetary support to the tune of US$12.3 million" (World Bank, 2004: 49).

Table 8.2 MoEHE operating budget in US$ millions (2001-2004)

Budget details	**Year**			
	2001	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Non-salary budget allocated by MOF	14.6	17.2	14.2	14.0
Funds actually received from MOF	3.0	3.5	2.7	-
Funds received from other sources	6.4	11.1	12.3	-
Financing gap	5.2	2.7	- 0.8	14.0
Salaries				
Salaries for MoEHE staff	195.0	199.8	209.1	247.4
Teacher salaries	173.5	177.8	186.1	220.2

Source: World Bank, 2004; MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005.

Teachers have played a strong role in keeping schools running. To address the effect movement restrictions were beginning to have on teaching capacity, the MoEHE relocated 15,000 of a total of 27,000 teachers to schools closer to their homes (World Bank, 2004). While this has helped, there are still thousands of teachers passing

through checkpoints due to a need for their specialization at a certain school. To facilitate this movement through checkpoints, teachers are given identification, which has met with mixed success.

The Ministry's most effective coping measure, however, was somewhat unintended. The MoEHE decentralized certain functions to the district level, to permit more flexibility and co-operation "without constant recourse to the Ministry" (Lempinen and Repo, 2002: 13). During the height of the occupation, the need to keep schools open has been seen as paramount, and district and local officers have been given primary authority to make sure this happens. This increased authority given to education directorates has been mentioned by a number of actors as one of the few positive, but unintended, consequences of *intifada*.

In addition to school openings and emergency plans, decentralized functions have included teacher deployment, training and budget management. Greater responsibility for school development and prioritization of issues has also been delegated (Kvalbein and Smith, 2003). While largely seen as a good thing, there are some who preach caution. One official commented:

> "Yes, we are on our way to decentralization, and hope to see more; but we should remember that the necessity was thrust upon us when were still in the middle of building a central system."

Others have warned that decentralization, a reality for the range of basic services, should not facilitate or be seen as complicit with the 'cantonization' of the occupied territory.

Emergency plans were developed at the school level. With support from the Ministry of Civil Defence, the MoEHE organized meetings with head teachers and provided training on how to act in emergencies. A plan was then made for each school and drills were held with pupils. In reviewing this emergency preparedness effort, Giacaman *et al.*, (2002) praised schools' "minimal level of preparedness to handle war conditions, but with a maximum initiative to manage despite circumstances". According to the MoEHE building department, improved safety regulations for school construction were also developed, dealing with issues such as exits, fire protection, laboratories and fences.

With more than 50 per cent of school budgets meant to come from school fees, this leaves a major gap when few fees are paid (MoEHE and UNESCO, 2005). In response to the worsening crisis, the PA made

a decision to waive fees for poorer families, essentially making fees discretionary. According to the World Bank, "in 2002/2003, an estimated 80 per cent of school fees were not paid" (2004: 50). Unsurprisingly, schools now claim there has been a noticeable gap in budgets. As a response, UNESCO initiated a small project which allocated US$500 to head teachers to fill this gap and reduce the urgency of these contributions. Piloted in 900 schools around the territory, the system seems to have been a success and has allowed schools to be more responsive to the needs of the occupation.

While the MoEHE was developing system-wide coping strategies, schools had a daily battle to maintain certain standards of learning. With a common focus on completing the syllabus, some measures used by schools included :

- specifically developed student worksheets;
- cutting down on holidays and time off;
- adding sessions to the working day;
- cancelling physical education, computer and art classes;
- speeding up lectures and cutting class projects.

(Giacaman *et al.*, 2002)

While seen as a way to maintain learning, these coping strategies have put added pressure on both students and teachers. Despite children's need to express themselves and their desire for sports, playtime and arts subjects, these activities were often removed in order "to compensate for lost days and catch up with curriculum requirements" (Save the Children, 2003: 25). Extracurricular activities are the "one part of schooling where children are active participants", says George Abu-Al-Zulof from DCI Palestine, "and there are so few resources that go that way". According to Issa Saba of the Ca'naan Institute:

> "The last four years, extracurricular activities were not seen as important to schools; but they are so important for children. We used to do a lot of sports, music, art, trips and festivals. These will come back, but we should have tried more, they would have been a comfort to students."

During this study, a group of boys from Jenin said that extracurricular activities were the most important part of school to them. "We need a venue for our artistic interests and creativity", explained one, "in our class, some students write poetry, but nobody is helping develop this talent; at this point all we do for free time is play football in the streets".

Girls from Hebron added: “We wish we had more art periods, now we do embroidery, but we would like to have more variety, like painting on glass”.

Box 11. Remedial education

Prior to the *intifada* there was little reason to consider the idea of distance learning because of the small size of the territory. In 2001, Hebron had been experiencing continuous closure for three to four months. “Eighteen percent of students in Hebron could not attend classes regularly compared with 6 per cent nationally. Twenty per cent of teachers in Hebron could not get to their school on a regular basis, compared with 9 percent nationally” (MoEHE, 2001: 6).

In response, a group of teachers and administrators from the district started what they called the ‘remedial education’ programme. The dual aims were to simplify the curriculum content and make up for lost school days. The project consisted of three elements: self-learning remedial education worksheets, extension remedial programmes, and broadcasting of remedial lessons.

The best known of these has been a series of take-home worksheets for grades one to three. “In the early stages of the project, 230 worksheets covering all curricular areas and different grade levels were prepared” (Sultana, 2003: 13). Children would take home a week’s worth or more of the worksheets, complete them with the help of their parents, and then bring them into school to their teachers when able. The worksheets were produced to a very high quality, with coloured pictures, and an individual 3-ring binder for every student. The following guidelines are used in production:

- An educational aim is identified for each worksheet
- Clear instructions are used so that the student can work independently
- Worksheets are designed so they can also be used with small groups at school
- There is an emphasis on fun to help break the monotonous routine of class work
- Language should be clearly and simply expressed, suitable to ability levels

Remedial education has further been used in areas where curfews and closures have been the most extreme – Hebron, Jenin, Nablus, Khan Younis, Tulkaram and Qalquiliya. There is some evidence of successful learning outcomes: “In one remedial education programme, for instance, out of the 57 children involved, only one failed [the] final examination, despite the fact that students had only followed half that year’s curriculum in a regular classroom” (Sultana, 2003: 20).

Source: National Institute for Educational Training, 2004

Role of civil society

Civil society has also played a role in responding to the difficult conditions. With the formal education system focused on maintenance, it has had little capacity to be innovative in response. Potential long-term innovation can be found in reflecting on the impact of educational alternatives from the first *intifada*. Jacqueline Sfeir of Bethlehem University explained:

> "There is much anecdotal evidence that non-formal education picks up what has been lost by the schools. I have been told by my university students that some of the most influential learning they remember was their time at pre-school, reading campaigns during school, or involvement in drama and sports clubs."

For education, the second *intifada* has led once again to a new resurgence in NGOs due to their mobility and innovation – but not necessarily their funding base. Plonski emphasizes their role in what she terms "transformative education", which continues to be "undertaken predominantly by non-governmental organizations working in ... the territory today" (2004: 6). Since the beginning of the *intifada*, "NGOs have refocused their programmes on emergency assistance" (World Bank, 2004: 60). Asia Habash of the ECRC explains: "Everyone was busy trying to save what they've done from the pressures of the incursions, curfews and closures, but we knew there were other needs out there and have done what we could". One simple example was educational literacy boxes, sent by the Tamer Institute to areas under closure. According to Jihan Helou, head of the Tamer Institute: "In 2002 a series of books, around 3,000 each, went out to schools in the most affected districts". NGOs have also affected humanitarian access. Nu'man Sherif, an official in Gaza, described "a village called Mawasi that was surrounded by a settlement; only NGOs can go there, liaising with the Israeli military authorities."

One important contribution NGOs have made during the *intifada* was to summer camps. Approximately 200 schools each year host a summer school, often in co-operation with NGOs or other local groups (MoEHE, 2004*c*). They have become quite a tradition in the Palestinian child's life. Zainab Alwazir, Assistant Deputy Minister for Gaza and formerly responsible for student activities, described their importance: "Since before the days of the PA, our children could not easily go anywhere outside our home. Once we Palestinians took over the education system

in 1994, we started summer camps at some of the schools, to help our children enjoy themselves and play".

Several years ago, accusations were made that summer camps were being used for indoctrination and military training, but these largely appeared unfounded (Alwazir, 2002). According to one observer, a correspondent who thought he saw children taking part in para-military training made the charges. However, when investigated, it was unclear what had happened and clear that the PA had no involvement in the camp. A declaration on summer camps was then developed by the MoEHE, with the support of UNICEF and several NGOs, to set common standards and deal with such risks. The declaration is centred on children's rights and sets out standards for activities.

Parents' councils have also had increased activity under the second *intifada*. This was partly because parents now had a much more specific and direct role in the education of their children, given that they were expected to supervise and support in the completion of assignments. In Hebron, where the remedial education project has been strong, parents have gone to school to ask teachers to how to deal with some of the issues arising in the worksheets. Several of the parents' councils meetings have focused on both the educational process and on learning strategies to help children cope with stress and anxiety (Sultana, 2003).

Addressing violence

As a reflection of the occupation, many Palestinians say that violence is increasingly pervasive in their own society. Education staff play a vital role in addressing the violence children face – whether outside or within the school. "Teachers find themselves having to interrupt regular teaching because students are too overwhelmed with the situation and want to talk about it" (Save the Children, 2003: 24). One teacher interviewed for this study emphasized the importance of this role:

> "The period of the second *intifada* is more like a war than any before, children have really been affected; schools have needed to train teachers and increase their counselling staff."

Both students and their parents believe that the school counsellor's function and the psychosocial programmes implemented have offered significant support during periods of crisis. Teachers from Hebron described how, with the support of the school counsellor, they began holding group sessions "to allow space for the students to express fears

and worries". They went on to explain how this was especially necessary as many girls would be stopped at the checkpoints and physically searched by soldiers. Time was given for girls to draw or write about these incidents.

External threats of violence faced by students have been rightly given much attention; however, there has generally been less space to address violence occurring in schools. During this research, an education specialist working in the system over the past decade claimed that "if there is anything we have missed it is violence in the schools". She added: "I've read recently that maybe half of all children have been touched by school violence – verbal abuse, physical beating from teachers, violence between students, or even students hitting teachers".

A recent Save the Children study highlights how difficult it is for schools to escape violence when surrounded by it. A teacher frames the obvious question:

> "How can schools be non-violent when there is violence all around, stretching from the home to all the globe? If world powers use force to achieve their aims, can less be expected here?"

Corporal punishment, including hitting, humiliation and collective punishment, is officially forbidden in schools, but with mixed success. In students' own words, "I forgot my homework so the teacher beat me one stroke". "Once I had a very bad stomach-ache so I went ... to ask to go home, but she screamed in my face and hurt me with her words" (Save the Children, 2004: 22). Some consider the ban to be culturally inappropriate, with a focus group of fathers in Hebron articulating this view. "We think a child has to be hit because that is what our religion says". Either way, there has been little support for teachers to find other ways to manage behaviour.

While recent Save the Children reports have unequivocally shown increased use of violence in schools (2003; 2004), it is interesting to note that its first education study after the start of the *intifada* suggested a fall in school violence due to teachers' sympathy for children living under the violence of occupation" (Save the Children, 2002: 11). Perhaps changes have happened in levels of violence, but it is difficult to know the reality, as not all children will report corporal punishment. Research on this area is difficult, as direct observation changes teachers' behaviour.

The issue of violence is not just about what physically happens in schools. With the tightening of the oppressive grip of military occupation,

and with the beginning of the *Al-Aqsa intifada* fuelled by youth, the politicization of schools has been somewhat inevitable. Most schools do have posters of children and youths who had been shot dead by Israeli soldiers prominently displayed; these posters of 'martyrs' – as they are commonly referred to – become the theme of long discussions. One teacher from Gaza explained in this study that "[o]ur kids have become politicians, they are still young children, but they think and act much older than their age."

It is hard to know how many children are picking up violent attitudes and behaviours. One research piece exploring the impact of political violence on youth in the OPT claims: "Many adolescents view violence as endemic and a socially justified problem-solving tool ... students describe their violent behaviour as imitative" (Watchlist, 2002: 10). However, the psychosocial assessment conducted by the NPA found that "[w]hile the majority of children consider it important to 'actively resist the Israeli occupation', most (71 per cent) focus on peaceful, non-violent ways to this end" (Arafat, 2003: 6). A further one fifth tend towards withdrawal, and only a minority of children (7 per cent) focus on violent means of resistance.

Undoubtedly, in the Palestinian context, hope is a difficult thing to maintain. At the height of the *intifada*, a Save the Children study found that only "two out of 120 child participants imagined that they would see a Palestinian state in the next decade" (2002: 17). With such despair, children and their families see education as their one hope, and a way to keep safe. Education is seen as a key strategy for keeping children out of violent clashes, since having young people at school helps reduce the risk of confrontation with Israeli troops and settlers. When no place is safe for a child, schools and teachers represent some type of authority, meaning schools are generally seen to be safer than nearly anywhere else.

Lessons learnt

- *If harsh controls affecting education are external to the system, little can be done to stop these actions and the focus of educational policy makers shifts to mitigating the consequences*. In Palestinian education, the human suffering, infrastructure damage and interruption of services has largely been outside of educationalists' control.
- *An accumulation of risk factors can lead to a situation that jeopardizes children's development, and should be addressed in the school environment*. Palestinian children themselves say they need to develop skills to stay safe, focus on personal improvement and strengthen relationships with others. They also say that education is their main means to improve their situation.
- *Coping strategies adopted by schools in a crisis need to focus on the system, as well as on students and their needs*. In OPT, there has been strong focus on measures to keep the system running (i.e. remedial education, emergency plans, some decentralization), but the emphasis on completing the curriculum has meant less attention to student psychosocial needs.
- *NGOs potentially have the space to adapt and respond to an education crisis, but need both the governing authority and external support to do so*. During the second *intifada*, as in the first, NGOs have tried to be active in the education sector, but were not always included in the MoEHE emergency plans.
- *In a conflict-affected environment, efforts should be made to reduce violence in schools, thereby enhancing their protective nature*. In the OPT, schools remain viewed by communities as one of the safest places children can be; yet little is being done to openly discuss or address violence in them.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

There can be no real conclusion to the Palestinian education story while the occupation continues. Today, going to school continues to put students and teachers at risk, while staying at home often seems no safer. Strict movement controls, humiliation at checkpoints, and loss of land and livelihoods have led to a feeling that even education has little hope to offer the average Palestinian child.

This study has explored how emergency and chronic crises have affected the Palestinian education system, both through the lens of recent educational challenges, and by looking back to examine the creation of a new education system. In a context where conflict is all-pervasive, it is difficult and perhaps not useful to separate what is an 'emergency measure' from normal 'development'. Over the past decade, the OPT has slid back and forth along the continuum of acute conflict to post-conflict, through chronic crises and then back to an acute stage. Areas examined here were chosen both for their specific importance to the Palestinian education story, and for possible lessons learnt in other conflict-affected environments.

While the current situation is rather bleak, as one former education official noted, it is vital to remember "the situation as it was then, and as it looks now, and you will see there has been an amazing amount of progress". Given that a truly Palestinian education system only started in 1994, following hundreds of years of outside rule, there is much to be proud of.

Former Palestinian Minister of Education Naim Abu-Hommos, when interviewed for this study, highlighted the following as major education successes under the MoEHE:

- harmonization of education systems between the West Bank and Gaza Strip;
- expansion to enable better access, including construction of schools;
- development and introduction of a new Palestinian curriculum;
- creation of the school counsellor role and the support they provide students; and

- maintenance of the education system, particularly keeping up enrolment and attendance rates, during the intense periods of occupation since 2000.

Taking stock

The conclusion of the first Five-Year Plan has meant that it is timely to further take stock of the PA's education achievements. A 2005 sector review to inform preparation of the next five-year plan looked at three major themes: (i) education policy, co-ordination, management efficiency, human and financial resources; (ii) access, equity and the learning environment; and (iii) quality, learning content, methodology and resources (Avenstrup, 2004*a*). The findings of this review were not yet available at the time of this publication; we will briefly consider here how this study informs achievement in each area.

i. *Education policy, co-ordination, management efficiency, human and financial resources*

A major success in education administration has been the unification of the systems across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Given restrictions of movement, however, benefits to unification are related more to nationalism than efficiency. Decentralization has led to tensions, as it is to the result of the occupation rather than of a central plan, and the risk that this process will contribute to further 'cantonization' of the territory. Lack of a law for general education is seen as a major gap in the sector and should be addressed, regardless of the progress towards a Palestinian State. Educational planning, and particularly the Five-Year Plan, has played an important role in bringing coherence to the sector. Merging the Five-Year and EFA Plans could eliminate confusion between the two and the need for duplication of writing and reporting work.

A charged political environment has hampered donor co-ordination, where political issues seem to bear more weight than aid efficiencies. A project approach continues to be evident across the 18 main bilateral donors to education. As part of an overall restructure in the Palestinian aid architecture, the ESWG now has a limited membership, with donors showing long-term commitment to participation. The newly formed ESWG includes the MoEHE, UNESCO, World Bank, EC, DfID, Finland, Norway, Ireland and Belgium. This new structure continues to leave major gaps in co-ordination with NGOs, which should be addressed.

The real education budget has been one third less than target projections laid out by the Five-Year Plan. The PA has largely used donor support in system development, including all school construction. A short-term solution, this reliance on aid with domestic funds barely covering recurrent costs is not viable in the longer-term. Additionally, the emergency policy of waiving school fees is in line with guaranteeing children's right to a free and compulsory education. This should not be reversed when the occupation ends, and thus schools should not count on fees for budgetary support.

ii. *Access, equity and learning environment*

High population growth has led to high growth in the student population over the past 10 years. It is testament both to the MoEHE's and donors' efforts that the number of classrooms and schools has grown at a slightly greater rate than population growth in the same period. The student-teacher ratio has been largely unchanged. In one estimate, at the current rate of population growth, US$100 million will be needed annually to maintain the pupil-classroom ratio. Sustainability of this investment, without attention to slowing population growth, should be explored with donors.

Efforts to increase access for the most marginalized children have been limited. While girls' enrolment is high, the equity of the education they receive has sometimes been questioned. While the MoEHE has piloted an inclusive education programme, involving 2,500 pupils with special needs, there are an estimated 28,000 children with some form of disability. Only one third of the MoEHE's buildings are accessible to disabled children. Moreover, a quarter of all working children do not attend school, and there is no overt support for working children who do attend. Greater attention must be given to the education of these and other marginalized children.

Access to early childhood education is low, with only 7 per cent of the eligible population attending. At the other end of the age spectrum, enrolment in TVET is equally low, at 7 per cent of students against a 15 per cent target. Both of these areas need greater MoEHE engagement, even if delivery stays in private hands: in early childhood education to expand access; and in TVET to take the comprehensive plan and create smaller models of success.

iii. *Quality, learning content, methodology and resources*

There appears a common feeling that not enough attention has been paid to quality improvements. The MoEHE has stated as much, admitting that prior to the Five-Year Plan development, "emphasis was on quantity" (MoEHE, 2000*b*: 6). One difficulty in addressing quality lies in lack of a common vision of what it is. Certain more traditional groups in the OPT see quality as having a new curriculum and a qualified teacher. Reformists contend that quality entails a full shift in educational philosophy, with schools supporting democratic and participatory aims, created by transforming pedagogy and creating active classrooms. In order to comprehensively address quality issues, the education sector in the OPT requires a common vision. Greater efforts could also be made to open dialogue on education quality across the spectrum of education stakeholders.

The new curriculum has been integral to bringing Palestinian identity, history and culture into the classroom. Allegations that the curriculum leads to incitement to hatred and violence are unfounded, however it does less than it could to encourage peace. The content is awkward in dealing with contentious issues, and does not reflect the spectrum of Palestinian views in all texts. Wider community input and dialogue should be encouraged in future revisions. The *Tawjihi*, with its emphasis on rote-based learning, does little to encourage a holistic approach to quality education. Attention should be given both to developing other measures of student assessment and to reviewing the appropriateness of the *Tawjihi* as a whole.

The quality of teaching and learning in the OPT has seen its most significant change in recent years through the introduction of the new Palestinian curriculum. While an improvement on relevance and to some extent learner participation, the new curriculum has not been a panacea for problems of quality. By all accounts, learning content is challenging, perhaps beyond an appropriate level. Other aspects of quality, such as ensuring that teaching and learning is protective, have not received as much attention. In the future, quality should be addressed from a holistic perspective.

Teacher development has lagged behind the curriculum in terms of its contributions to quality. While there are more than enough formally-qualified teachers – a distinct improvement from the early days of the PA – the qualification may not mean much. In-service teacher training tends to be fragmented, without an overall understanding of

the knowledge and skills needed by various teachers. Moreover, there is no quality assurance across pre-service teacher training programmes. To underpin these problems, teacher motivation is low due to what are perceived as low salaries. The teacher education strategy currently under development should be supported and treated as a central document guiding development across the profession.

Still waiting ...

It is difficult to disagree that an end to the occupation and a permanent peace is the largest determinant in fulfilling Palestinian children's right to education. In the words the Gaza-based former Deputy Minister for Education, Abdullah Abdelmonem:

> "We've progressed, but ultimately everything depends on the peace process. Everything will change if we do ever achieve peace and our own state – the economic, the social, the political – and education will have to change along with [those changes]."

However, current possibilities for peace seem bleak. The increase in terrorism during the second *intifada* has led many Israelis to believe that there is no legitimate Palestinian partner willing to live in peace. Harsh Israeli countermeasures cause Palestinians to feel the same way about Israel.

The Israeli government under Ariel Sharon therefore began to search for ways to unilaterally impose a 'peace'. The creation of the separation wall is a case in point, with its *de facto* border, regardless of the legality of the line or its acceptance by the other side. The 2005 Israeli disengagement from Gaza provides another example. Hailed by some as the first movement towards peace in years, others consider it a unilateral exercise lacking good faith. The idea of 'disengagement' has precedent in the Oslo agreements, and withdrawal from Gaza has meant the removal of all settlements in that part of the territory. However, to date, control of borders, energy, water and access has remained firmly with Israel. This makes an end to the occupation ring rather falsely.

Although formal negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have broken down at the time of this writing, the main political outcome of the Oslo Accords does remain in effect – the PA continues to exist.

> "The new Palestinian Authority has more power than any Palestinian agency has had in the twentieth century. With this power comes

> responsibility and accountability, which cannot be shirked or shunted off onto another actor" (Khalidi, 1997 in Brown, 2003: 244).

Calls for accountability within the PA have become increasingly strong in recent years – both internationally and domestically. Major changes have been seen in the PA, starting with the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004. Foreign calls for accountability have centred on security, and the January 2005 presidential election was seen as a positive step when it brought moderate Mahmoud Abbas to power. On the other hand, Palestinians' demands for accountability have centred on social services, anti-corruption, and a new approach to the stalled peace. After 10 years with no election, the January 2006 Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) vote brought the opposition group Hamas to power. Seen by many Palestinians as strong in provision of social services and more trustworthy than the previous party, in foreign circles its lack of recognition of Israel is seen as a rejection of the security agenda.

Time will tell how these developments will affect both Palestinian society and its education system. While the political environment seems at a stalemate, it is important to ask what will happen if support is completely withdrawn from the PA under its new leadership. Will all the gains of the past decade be erased? As expressed by James Wolfensohn, Middle East envoy for the *Quartet*:

> "If you have a million kids on the street ... with no schools to go to ... and if the basic framework of the Palestinian Territor[y] breaks down, it's hard to imagine that you're going to have peace" (Kurata, 2006).

Lessons learnt

The following are an overview of the range of lessons learnt during the analysis for this study. While drawn from a specific context, a number of these lessons may have applicability for other situations of chronic crisis.

Inheritance

- *Education and its purpose can be defined not only by those in authority, but also by those who participate in schooling*. Historically education was used by occupiers of the OPT as a political tool; but at the same time, Palestinians seized educational opportunities as a means to advance themselves.

- *Seeing oneself reflected in a curriculum is especially significant to a people struggling with questions of sovereignty*. One of the main concerns with previous education systems was that none advanced Palestinian identity, culture or history.
- *When a formal system has broken down, non-formal education can be an important strategy in maintaining learning*. During the first *intifada*, 'popular education' was an attempt to make up for a collapsing education system, made possible through grassroots organizations, charitable societies and NGOs.
- *The inclusion of education in a peace agreement is vital in clarifying authority*. Palestinian negotiators ensured that education was among the first sectors handed over in the Oslo Accords, which was significant as education is one of the largest and most visible services of any governing authority.

Growing pains

- *Transparency in hiring is an essential part of the shift from political movement to government*. In the OPT, MoEHE staff were chosen at first by willingness and ability, with a transparent process perhaps taking longer than it should to have been put in place.
- *A centralized approach to governance might improve unity in a disparate territory, but at the expense of ownership and decision-making at the more local levels*. Influenced by the legacy of occupying powers, in the OPT, the centralized education system stems primarily from an attempt to unify separate systems and geography.
- *A society struggling for liberation builds strong civic groups, which, as a new authority emerges, can be redefined as partners or remain as opposition*. The PA and the MoEHE have had an uneasy relationship particularly with NGOs, being slow to recognize the innovation and added value they bring.

An emerging system

- *Education planning is not only about vision, but also about donor harmonization*. In OPT, the push for a Five-Year Plan seems to have initially been driven by donor needs, but became the Ministry's own through strong leadership and consultation.
- *Fulfilling education rights can be complicated by uncertain political status, which makes creation of domestic law and application of*

international law difficult. The PA's reluctance to develop and enact education law has effectively meant that regulations from former occupying regimes continue.

- *When a new governing authority is formed, support for recurrent costs for a substantial period of time is important to stability*. Several multi-donor trust funds, most notably the Holst Fund, supported wage costs in the PA for a two-year period, with the EC directly supporting teacher salaries.
- *Movement beyond donor co-ordination to harmonized or pooled funds is perceived as a low priority in a crisis*. In OPT, momentum towards an education sector-wide approach stalled with the outbreak of the second *intifada*.

Access and inclusion

- *Education access issues are best tackled in a holistic manner, dealing both with quantitative and qualitative parts of the problem*. The approach of the MoEHE to access has been largely quantitative, with a focus on construction. More attention could be given to addressing high birth rates, addressing cost barriers and building acceptance of co-educational schooling.
- *Marginalized children are more likely to be excluded during a time of crisis, and the system should adapt to ensure inclusion*. In dealing with girls, the Ministry has taken a varied approach to inclusion. However, for children with disabilities and working children, focus has largely been on individuals, with a few pilots looking at adapting the system.
- *Early childhood education, as a sub-sector outside of basic education, is less stable and more susceptible to funding shifts over the course of a crisis*. In OPT, with the MoEHE playing a supervisory role, sustainability of pre-schools has varied and progress in the sub-sector has largely been led by NGOs such as the ECRC.
- *While TVET can be a central contributor towards a viable economy, it is difficult to expand in the midst of an uncertain economy*. In OPT, efforts to implement an overarching strategy for TVET have largely failed, and attention has been at the macro, rather than a search for small, replicable models.

A new curriculum

- *A national curriculum is a visible indicator of identity and plays an important role in building confidence in an education system.* The new Palestinian curriculum is widely seen as a major success, offering evidence of an ability to move forward, while still embodying ongoing debates facing the society.
- *In a fragmented territory lacking political consensus, formation of national curriculum can be a highly contested process.* Should it be reformist or conservative in approach? Ambitious or realistic? Religious or secular? The Palestinian curriculum, unable to answer definitively, attempts a balancing act.
- *Criticism of curriculum content is likely to reflect the wider political environment.* The Palestinian curriculum on the whole withstands the harsher accusations of those who claim it incites hatred; however, awkward in parts, it could arguably have done more to promote an understanding of the 'other'.
- *In a context of chronic crisis, traditional pedagogies and methods of assessment, could be made more appropriate by actively engaging the learner.* Critics of Palestinian education say that it does not do enough to promote active learning, with the *Tawjihi* being a classic example of testing of rote learning.

Teacher development

- *Having an individual in a school who is trained and responsible for counselling can provide significant support to students living in conflict-affected environments.* Palestinian students and their teachers regularly cite the role of school counsellor as important to psychosocial care.
- *Rapid teacher training can 'activate' teachers following a crisis; however, separate initiatives should link to wider teacher training plans.* In OPT, both in-service and pre-service teacher training have been implemented in a fragmented manner, focusing on delivery of separate courses rather than being built around a comprehensive skill set for teachers.
- *While teacher wage concerns might be suspended as a conflict becomes more active, to overlook these calls has ongoing impact on teacher motivation.* Teacher dissent and harsh PA reaction to union

activity have not been frequent since the second *intifada*. However, the issues have not gone away and are likely to re-emerge in time.

Occupation renewed

- *If harsh controls affecting education are external to the system, little can be done to stop these actions and the focus of educational policy makers shifts to mitigating the consequences*. In Palestinian education, the human suffering, infrastructure damage and interruption of services has largely been outside of educationalists' control.
- *An accumulation of risk factors can lead to a situation that jeopardizes children's development, and should be addressed in the school environment*. Palestinian children themselves say they need to develop skills to stay safe, focus on personal improvement and strengthen relationships with others. They also say that education is their main means to improve their situation.
- *Coping strategies adopted by schools in a crisis need to focus on the system, as well as on students and their needs*. In OPT there has been strong focus on measures to keep the system running (i.e. remedial education, emergency plans, some decentralization), but the emphasis on completing the curriculum has meant less attention to student psychosocial needs.
- *NGOs potentially have the space to adapt and respond to an education crisis, but need both governing authority and the external support to do so*. During the second *intifada*, as in the first, NGOs have tried to be active in the education sector. However, they were not always included in the MoEHE's emergency plans.
- *In a conflict-affected environment, efforts should be made to reduce violence in schools, thereby enhancing their protective nature*. In the OPT, schools remain viewed by communities as one of the safest places children can be; yet little is being done to openly discuss or address violence in them.

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Appendix 1

Organization structure for the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education

THE MINISTER
Council for higher education
Council for scientific research
Minister office
Advisors and assistants
DEPUTY MINISTER
Deputy minister office
Loan fund
Office
Accreditation and quality assurance commmision
Office
Curriculum committee
Examinations committee
Educational committee
TVET committee
DEANS committee
Scholarship committee
Office
Assistant deputy minister for higher education
Deputy minister for education / West Bank
Tendering committee
District directors committee
Assistant deputy minister for education /Gaza
D.G. for higher education (Gaza)
D.G. for development and scientific research
D.G. for university education
D.G. for technical and vocational education
Registry
Legal department
Computer center
Assessment and evaluation center
Curriculum center
School health and counseling center
D.G. for planning
D.G. for student affairs
D.G. for examinations
D.G. for training and supervision
D.G. for genteral education
D.G. for educational technology
D.G. for field follow up
D.G. for financial affairs
D.G. for administrative affairs
D.G. for textbooks printing
D.G. for supplies
D.G. for buildings
D.G. for international and public relations
Directorates of education for northern governorates
Directorates of southern governorates
Jerusalem
Suburb
Ramallah & Albireh
Nablus
Salfeet
Jenin
Qabatieh
Hebron
South Hebron
Bethlehem
Qalqilia
Tulkarem
Jericho
Rafah
Khan Younis
North Gaza
Gaza

Appendix 2

Overview of Five-Year Plan

Upon the transfer of responsibility of the Palestinian educational system to the Palestinian National Authority, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education formulated a new strategy with a new vision for the future of Palestinian education potential, challenges, and objectives. This strategy was translated into the Five-Year-Plan focusing on five key areas: access to education for all children; quality of education; formal and non-formal education; management capacity in planning, administration and finance; and human resources of the educational system.

Five developmental principles

1. Education as a human right: All children between the ages of six and 16 years old have the right to receive free basic education, regardless of social or economic status, gender, or religious belief.
2. Education as the basic component of citizenship: Together with the family and the community, the school shall be a main catalyst for developing the Palestinian citizen's character, moral values and social responsibilities.
3. Education as a tool for social and economic development: Education must meet the political, social and economic challenges of Palestinian society.
4. Education as the basis for social and moral values, and democracy: Education shall be the cornerstone for building a Palestinian society with strong commitment to ethics, principles, and openness to the global culture.
5. Education as a continuous, renewable, participatory process: Education is a life-long activity, in and out of school, fuelled by classroom learning, social relations and communications, community activities, and the mass media.

The Ministry, therefore, adopted the approach of working co-operatively and collectively with official and non-official institutions in formulating and implementing the plan.

Implementation of the comprehensive Five-Year-Plan

To translate the plan into action, procedures and standards were prepared to insure proper implementation in achieving the five elements of the plan:

ONE This programme aims to provide the opportunity for all children and adults of all ages to receive proper education, from kindergarten to secondary school, by recruiting new teachers, adding new classrooms, textbooks, increasing the level of enrolment in the secondary stage, and decreasing the drop-out rate. The expected cost of the programme is approximately $1319.7 million for the five-year period of the plan.

TWO The programme's main objectives in developing and achieving quality education are the production, assessment, evaluation, and enrichment of school textbooks and instruction manuals for the Palestinian Curriculum as well as teacher and supervisor training. This programme will cost $35.7 million.

THREE The development of a vocational and technical training programme that focuses on meeting the basic needs of the local market, and providing the skilled and proficient workforce that can contribute positively to the national economy. The plan also offers extended learning within the framework of formal education through the introduction of technical training, as well as providing schools with the necessary equipment and resources. The overall cost of the programme is estimated to be around $72.1 million in 2000-2004.

FOUR Developing new programmes for general education, pre-school care, informal education, adult education, and special education, that is available for the general population. By providing schooling for kindergarten-age children the programme offers support for parents and improves the quality of education in the long-run. $9.1 million will be allocated for the programme.

FIVE Restructuring the financial and administrative systems to ensure efficient use of available resources. The programme will include the school-map project, as well as reinforce concepts of strategic planning and organizational administration. It focuses on developing and reviewing policies, and rules and regulations; updating of position responsibilities and job descriptions; and developing relations between schools and the local community. The estimated cost for the life of this programme is about $109.2 million.

From: www.moe.gov.ps/ENG/strategies/5yearplan.html

Appendix 3

Palestinian Child Law 2005

7th Section – Educational Rights

Article 37

1. In accordance with the provisions of law:
   a. Every child shall have the right to free education and learning in public school until the completion of secondary stage schooling.
   b. Education is compulsory until the completion of the stage of higher basic schooling as a minimum.
2. The state will take all appropriate measures needed to prevent the early drop-out of children from schools.

Article 38

The State shall take all appropriate and effective measures and arrangements with the aim to eliminating all forms of discrimination in access to the right to education, and shall work towards achieving actual equal opportunities among all children.

Article 39

The State shall take all arrangements to:

1. Promote and strengthen the participation of students and their parents in all decisions relevant to their situation.
2. Foster the dignity of the child, particularly when adopting decisions or developing programmes, which aim at prohibiting all forms of violence in schools, regardless of the source.

Article 40

The State shall also ensure the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Article 41

1. The child with special needs shall have the right to education and training in the same schools and centers open for non-disabled students.

2. In cases of exceptional disability, the State shall be committed to provide education and training in special classes, schools, or centers where the following conditions are met:
   a. They are linked to the regular educational system and appropriate for the needs of the child.
   b. They be accessible and in proximity to the place of residence.
   c. They provide all types and levels of education, according to their needs.
   d. Provide persons who are educationally qualified to educate and train them according to their disability.

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