

Representations of Shoah and Holocaust Terms in Selected Curriculum Documents: A Teacher's Perspective¹

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Abstract The paper focuses on representations of Shoah and Holocaust terms in selected curriculum documents (*Framework educational program for basic education* and Israeli curricular documents¹ for primary and secondary school education). Emphasis is placed on the Israeli curriculum, which can be considered exemplary in its structure due to the defined terms. The Israeli curriculum is compared with selected Czech curriculum document in the context of the first phase of the research survey focused on the views of teachers of Czech language and literature at the second grade of primary school. We try to explain the identified differences in connection with the need of strategies regarding historical, social and geographical aspects. The theoretical basis for the interpretation of concepts in world curriculum documents is formed by the ideas of selected world experts in the field. Based on their ideas, we try to expose the topicality of the defined issues, and the associated great need for its implementation into Czech curriculum document. We compare the application of the given terms in the Czech curriculum document with the results of the first phase of the research conducted among teachers of Czech language and literature in one region of the Czech Republic. Based on the response of a randomly selected sample of respondents, we find that the extent of application of the defined terms is to a large extent reflected in the presented knowledge.

Keywords Shoah, Holocaust, Education, Curriculum Documents, Israeli State Schools

1. Introduction

The article explores the use of the Shoah (Holocaust²) phenomenon in Israeli curriculum system as a country where considerable emphasis is placed on the teaching of the area in question and which could be a paradigm for the integration of the holocaust phenomena into curriculum documents³. We will try to compare the state of application of the defined themes with the application of the defined problems within the Czech curriculum system we will focus in the definition of Shoah and Holocaust, and then introduce the content of the Israeli curriculum in public schools (*junior high school* and *high school*). We then compare the conceptual content with the same terms in the Czech curriculum, given the subject of the authors' contribution, we will focus on the *Framework Education Program for Basic Education*⁴. The contribution includes a reference to the worldwide curriculum documents to which we are anchoring the Israeli and Czech curriculum. The degree of representation of the defined terms is commented on according to the results of the first phase of the research (**qualitative part**), which deals with the views of the Czech language and literature on the implementation of the Shoah theme in the teaching of literary education, as well as the connotation with the results of the analysis of literary readers for the second grade of primary schools, which

2 "The sacred cult (the Holocaust, the sacrifice of acceptance) celebrates and renews the covenant of the fathers with God the Creator in anticipation of the final fulfillment of his promise" [8 p10]. According to Le Project Aladin [15], the Holocaust is a "preferred name for the Nazi's systematic genocide of some 6 million Jews during World War II".

3 Rýdl & Šmelová [20 p15] notes that in the spring of 1999, the Czech government adopted a fundamental document on the new concept of the Czech educational system, which was concretized in the text of the so-called White Book (...). An important change is the proposal for a three-step curriculum consisting of the National Curriculum (National Curriculum), which defines the general objectives and focus from which the *Framework Educational Programs* for the individual educational levels ...".

4 Furthermore, the *RVP ZV*.

1 Due to the considerable autonomy of Israeli educational institutions, we have been based on Carrier's analysis and subsequent comparison of curriculum documents [6]. Those interested in specific curricular documents for primary and secondary education refer to the Israeli Ministry of Education website [22].

currently have a clause⁵ of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic⁶.

2. Terminological Anchor

According to Mémorial de la Shoah [16 What is the Shoah? p not listed] the Shoah is "... the Hebrew word for 'catastrophe'. This term specifically means the killing of 6 million Jews in Europe by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during the Second World War. The English-speaking countries more use the word Holocaust, which is Greek for "sacrifice by fire".

In the paper, we conceptualize Shoah as a war-like experience from a Jewish perspective. This term and the concept of the Holocaust are, to a large extent, exemplified in curriculum documents mixed and conceived as synonymous expressions for the same empire.

We do not consider the synonymizing of the naming to be an insufficient prerequisite for the implementation of these events into teaching, their curricular anchoring. From a terminological point of view, we see the importance in explicit expression of the view of the given topic and, depending on the chosen focus, to use the used names.

The non-differentiation of terminology in the field of world curriculum documents is expressed by Carrier [5 p5]: "It is generally referred to as the 'Holocaust', while lesser curricula use the term 'Shoah', or else both terms in conjunction. In some cases, the curriculum is preceded by both the terms 'Holocaust' over 'Shoah' 'describing the event'. Alternative terms, such as 'extermination' or genocide 'of the Jews', are indirect references to the event (with terms such as 'concentration camp' or 'Final Solution')." The difference can also be traced to the explicit naming of victims of these phenomena.

We believe that the terminological anchoring of the terms Shoah (Holocaust) within the prescribed curriculum⁷ is currently very topical. Shoah can be perceived as a warning of prejudice, intolerance, stigmatization of a group of persons with common religion, sexual orientation, political or other opinion. Abrams in the article on Elie Wiesel [1] says that the Shoah phenomenon can be seen as a warning of who is "different - whether black or white, Jew or Arab, Christian or Muslim - everyone whose

orientation differs politically, philosophically, sexually".

Cotler's article *7 Lessons from the Holocaust* [9], inspired by Bauer, explains what the teacher should teach students as *gros* of the issue. We perceive each *responsibility / remembrance* as a theoretical dogmatic framework for putting the defined issues into curricular documents.

Cotler's claim can be summarized in several parts⁸. Summing up Cotler's thoughts, it can be said that the Shoah/ Holocaust theme should necessarily be part of the prescribed curriculum [17 p37]. Schooling should ensure that Cotler's points are met, so that integration can lead to de-mythicizing the subject, defining the phenomenon, understanding the roots of its origins, and avoiding the occurrence of other genocides (in connection with racism and anti-Semitism), the ability to decipher parallels between events, which have taken place in the past, and those that are happening in the world now. In the schools, we view the status of the phenomena in opposition to democracy, tolerance, freedom of expression, equality.

3. Method of Anchoring Defined Terms in Curriculum Documents

Carrier [6] details how the Holocaust or Shoah terms are in the curriculum. Author in the publication of the concepts of holocaust have divided into four groups, with differences between areas being formed by explicitly putting the term on the pages of the document.

Direct reference includes the educational curriculum of the countries in which we find the word Holocaust or Shoah, or an explicit alternative naming of these events⁹. The term Holocaust includes, for example, the Albanian, Ethiopian, or Polish¹⁰ curriculum [6 p68]. The term "Shoah" was used by the creators of these documents in Italy or Côte d'Ivoire. Mixed model (using of both concepts) can be found, for example, in Germany (Saxony) or Switzerland¹¹. Alternative naming, for example, in Namibia, Germany (Lower Saxony) and Belgium [6 p69].

Partial references can be characterized by the situation when "the Holocaust named in the curriculum as a means to other ends, the historical meaning and complexity of the event are not addressed" [5 p5]. Countries that have Holocaust / Shoah curricular anchors solved in this way include, for example, Slovenia, Belize or some states of the

5 The endorsement is approved by the Ministry for a fixed term for individual textbooks. Schools that use teaching aids with this clause may request reimbursement of the costs associated with the purchase of textbooks. Schools may also use teaching aids without this clause in the classroom, but they are not reimbursed.

6 The list is available from www.msmt.cz.

7 "An official document that is binding on certain types of schools or on the entire education system" [16 p37]. In the case of Czech educational reality in elementary schools, it is the *RVP ZV*.

8. See http://www.aish.com/ho/i/7_Lessons_from_the_Holocaust.html?&mpw for more.

9 For example, genocide against the Jews or 'Nazi persecution of minorities'.

10 In the wider context of the Holocaust in Poland, the publication *"Jewish Studies and Holocaust Education in Poland"* [22].

11 The mixed model can be found in most of the Länder of Switzerland. However, this country does not have a single curriculum document [6 p69]. The issue of the holocaust in the context of a comprehensive education system is addressed, for example, by the publication of the Swiss and the Holocaust: teaching of the contested history [20].

United States of America¹².

The third group of references is a reminder of the terms mentioned only in context (*context only*) and is found in curricula that mention the suffering of World War II in a broader context (strictly complex character). These include, for example, Kenya, Norway, or Rwanda¹³ [5 p5].

The latest model includes countries that do not have deadlines in their curriculum documents (*no references*). These are countries¹⁴ whose curriculum "do not stipulate the specific contents of history teaching" [5 p6].

It is worth mentioning the fact that considerable differences can be observed in the field of integration of the subjects mentioned between schools found in Western Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. In schools that were under the influence of the Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s, the issue of Shoah with all its connotations is "largely ignored or underplayed" [5 p168]. This is mainly due to a certain tabooing of one line of war events in the context of the Soviet Union's political ideas, which was also reflected in the use of the terms holocaust in textbooks used in schools at the time when Czechoslovak Communist Party ruled in Czechoslovakia. Differences can also be traced between schools within Israel, between private, state and Jewish educational institutions (this distribution is due to the considerable autonomy of Israeli schools).

In conjecture with Santang's statement [3] "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it," we present the concept of teaching Holocaust at Israeli state schools.

4. The Theme of Shoah (Holocaust) at Israeli Schools

Israel can be described as the originator of the Shoah term. At the same time, it is the country that owes the Second World War to its creation. In a comprehensive range, the situation is very complicated, so it is necessary to weigh the way in which pupils approach the issue. Kaminka in his article *Teaching about the Holocaust in Israel: A Pedagogical Approach Adopted by the Israeli Ministry of Education* [12], emphasizes the importance of a careful approach to the issue in terms of the cultural sensitivity of the target audience, and depending on current trends in the leadership of the educational process. "In Israel, where holocaust education has been created and developer over decades to produce models used around the world, this approach can be examined using the prism of the nationally established curriculum" [12]. It is worth

mentioning that the Yad Vashem Museum provides a considerable amount of digitized material that can be used in the classroom. The results of the first phase of the research show that 90 % of Czech teachers of Czech language and literature do not know the website of the mentioned museum even though they are completely translated into the Czech language.

Integration of the Shoah (Holocaust) is in the autonomy of schools and their curriculum (in the Czech Republic, these are the level of school education programs) that schools create themselves, based on profiling in relation to geographical or demographic aspects and the like. In the *RVP ZV* in the Czech Republic, which defines the boundaries of the school education program for the same level of education and in the framework of what determines what¹⁵ and when to be learned, the theme Shoah is not included, we will only meet the term Holocaust¹⁶. Under department "Modern Times" for the second grade of primary schools we besides find the matter: "international political and economic situation in the 20s and 30s; totalitarian systems - communism, fascism, Nazism - consequences for Czechoslovakia and the world; World War II, Holocaust; situation in our countries, domestic and foreign resistance; political, power and economic consequences of war" [10 p56]. In Israeli curriculum documents for all levels of education there has been a change in the use of the Shoah theme, which has been reflected in a new approach to the implementation of the identified themes in the curriculum. The curricular changes have been coordinated by the Israeli Ministry of Education [22], the Israeli Yad Vashem Museum and other Shoah Institutions. "The new curriculum includes Shoah education units designed for kindergarten, elementary school, junior high school and high school, between 2 and 15 hours of Shoah education per year, depending on the age group" [7 pp. 183 - 184]. According to the UNESCO-protected publication, the Shoah is implemented in several places in the Israeli document by direct reference to the teaching of History, within the thematic units anti-Semitism and Holocaust; Nazism and the Holocaust [5 p62].

5. Terminological Anchoring of the Shoah Phenomenon within School Education Programs in the Czech Republic

With the (no)application of the term Shoah and the Holocaust as part of the Czech curriculum documents, the question of implementation of the defined phenomenon is

12 In the case of the United States of America, the school documents are similar to the situation in Switzerland.

13 The educational and curricular situation in Rwanda is specific in that the knowledge explicitly between fascism and Nazism is explicitly mentioned, as well as the comparison of these directions with the events that took place in Rwanda in the recent past [6 p69].

14 For example, Dominica, Fiji, Iceland.

15 In the RVP ZV, the information is defined in Part D - Principles for the Processing, Evaluation and Modification of the School Educational Program [11 pp154-159].

16 Within the subject curriculum of History [11 p56].

related to the individual educational fields in the Czech educational reality at the second grade of elementary schools. The first phase (qualitative) of the research showed that there is no connection between the terminological anchor of the Holocaust in the *RVP ZV* (see above) and how the Holocaust is/ is not anchored within the school education program. *Figure 1* presents the representation of the Shoah term in educational fields in the field of school curriculum documents. As can be seen from the graphical representation, the comparable use of the term Shoah can be seen within the educational disciplines of Czech language and literature and History. A lower proportion of representation is evident in the subject of Civic education. A total of 25% of the respondents to the qualitative part of the research survey stated that the Shoah term is not included in the programs of their school.

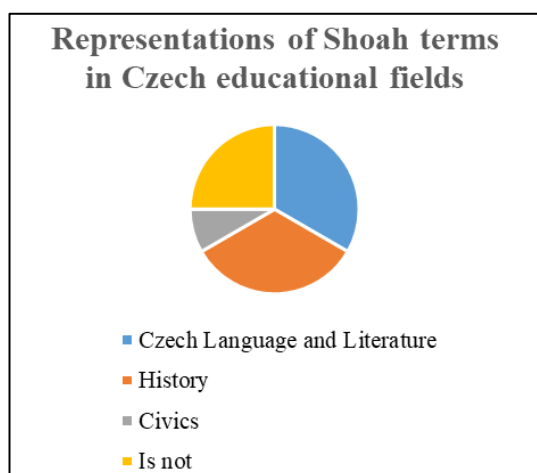


Figure 1. Representations of Shoah terms in Czech educational fields

In connotation, the fact that the term Shoah is not anchored within the prescribed Czech curriculum document (*RVP ZV*), but that it can be found in the curriculum of some educational disciplines within school education program is in our opinion very positive and promises a significant shift in the application of the theme of Shoah in the field of the Czech curriculum in terms of the regression influence of *RVP ZV* by school programs.

The use of the Shoah term in the Czech language and literature is to a large extent influenced by the fact that almost all readers presently have a clause of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic¹⁷.

6. Cohen's Research

Cohen [7 p167] publishes the results of his research

study¹⁸ on the development of education in Shoah (*direct reference*) at **Israeli state schools**, which dealt with the readiness of teachers to teach the subject, depending on the ongoing debate (not only) about anchoring defined terms into curriculum documents of certain levels of education in Israel. Methods of clogging a defined phenomenon in broader contexts (not the way anchoring, but the concept of teaching depending on different aspects). Cohen's research "considers the role of teacher agency and curricular flexibility as pedagogic features of Shoah education in Israeli state schools" [7 p167]. Cohen's research focused on teachers within the framework of educational mediation of the Shoah phenomenon for pupils and the degree of teacher's initiative in the process.

In the introduction of Cohen, a professor of sociology and pedagogy at the Bar-Ilan University in Israel, stresses that "the Shoah (Holocaust) is inherently a difficult, sensitive and complex subject to address in schools. How this subject is (or is not) addressed in various times, places and school systems is linked to many demographic, political, social and pedagogic factors" [7 p167]. Kaminka concurs with Cohen in the social anchoring thesis in the area of social anchoring of the given topic and the difficult grasp of the issues within the educational process [7 p168]. According to Cohen [7 p167], the subject provides scope for more general discussions, such as anti-Semitism, generally human values, minority rights or political power.

As for state Israeli schools, students have been involved in the educational process several times, both within formal (*formal, school*) and informal (*informal, out-of-school*) activities [7 p62].

Cohen [7] found that the issue was inherently more important to the Jews in the evaluation of the research, in particular because of a certain degree of stigmatization of the Jewish people in cooperation with an attempt to understand these events. The research results also offered comparisons between junior high school students and elementary schools. "Shoah education has become well established in junior high schools. Elementary school students and even kindergarteners are introduced to the issue through ceremonies on the national Shoah Memorial Day" [7 p174].

Research has brought remarkable results in the Shoah theme. The issue was discussed with the heads of Israeli state schools in an interview. The hourly grant of Shoah at junior high school and high school ranged from 130 to 150 hours a year (school and out-of-school activities). As it is expected, the themes are most used in the teaching of History, but it is also implemented in Literary education¹⁹,

17 Those interested in the detailed results of reading readers refer to the article To the application of the Shoah topic in literary readers for the second level of elementary schools [13].

18 The research design consisted of a quantitative part - a questionnaire and part of a qualitative - focus group, interview, observation. A questionnaire survey was carried out among students, teachers and heads of state schools in Israel on "junior high schools and high schools in the Hebrew language of the state school system in all geographic of the country" [7 p171].

19 The possibilities of literary education are expressed by Oliveira Jr. [18]:

Civic education, religion and other fields of education [7 p175]. A total of 72 % of Israeli State School directors and 79 % of teachers from the same Institutions believe that an hourly grant for the subject should be increased. Of the same opinion, 83 % of students have an identical form of institutional education.

7. Comparison of the Czech and Israeli Curricular Anchor of Shoah

In the comparison of the curricular anchoring of the term "Shoah" within the Israeli curriculum system with the application of this issue in Czech curriculum documents, we must regret that the rate of representation of the Shoah phenomenon in the curriculum documents of the Czech Republic is considerably lower. Similarly, it is possible to characterize the personal contribution of teachers in the field of teaching of the given subject [7 p175].

The point of contact between the Czech and Israeli curriculum is the *direct reference* to the term Holocaust, but the summary representation is incomparable. In the most recent Israeli documents, direct reference is Nazism and the Holocaust on ten pages in the thematic group; within the theme of Nazism, anti-Semitism, World War II, and the Holocaust on nine pages [6 p62]. In the *RVP ZV* in the Czech Republic, a *direct reference* is a part of the thematic unit World War II - global and economic aspects, science and technology in the service of war, warfare and the Holocaust [6 p58] only on one side [11 p56].

As can be seen from the above, in the *RVP ZV* we meet the term Holocaust, the concept of Shoah is not found in it. We do not meet terms either in the context of cross-cutting themes, which, with their expected outcomes, closely correspond to the given issues and encourage the implementation of the given phenomena.

8. Conclusions

The paper presented anchor of the Shoah / Holocaust in world curriculum documents, with special reference to the Israeli charter. The high degree of representation of the defined phenomena in Israeli prescribed texts is due, among other things, to historical milestones in Israel's history and the need to prevent them from being preceded. The subject is of great interest to students and teachers, which we have attempted to demonstrate through selected research. This research, together with other Israeli research surveys [21] provides considerable potential for reflection on the inspiration of Czech education from Israeli in terms

of curricular anchoring of given terms, but also on the use of methods of teaching this subject. The professional public interested in this field should strive to implement the term Shoah and the Holocaust (to a greater extent) in Czech educational documents, especially for reasons of considerable timeliness within the Czech Republic and in the context of an increasingly globalizing world. Topics such as situations on the political scene, the protection of democracy, the preservation (improvement) of the rights of citizens, regardless of race or belonging to different minorities and many others, may be covered. Israeli education provides us with proof that the identified phenomena can be successfully integrated into several levels of education, the knowledge interconnected and deepened.

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ⁱ The paper is a modified version of the article *Representation of Shoah and the Holocaust Terms in Selected Curriculum Documents* [14], which was published in the Czech language in the Reviewed Proceedings of the Scientific Interdisciplinary International Scientific Conference of Doctoral Students and Expert Assistants - QUAERE.