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Human Rights Education in Conflict and Occupation **Teaching Human Rights in Palestinian Schools**

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Abstract

This study builds on the idea that the conceptualisation and implementation of human rights education in the classroom and other instances in the local community can be different from the way in which the concept is understood and described in international policy documents. The literature review indicates that the context and local actors can affect the way human rights education is carried out. However, there has been little discussion on how human rights education practices are affected by a political conflict and oppression. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to increase knowledge about the implementation of human rights education, by contributing with perspectives on how a context marked by conflict and injustice can affect the norms and conditions for education in human rights. The occupied Palestinian territory is used as a case study, and interviews were carried out in which educators and experts describe their experiences regarding teaching human rights in a conflict-troubled society. In the occupied Palestinian territory, there is a large gap between the visions of the human rights instruments and the reality on the ground. These conditions make human rights education – a process that should aim to bridge the gap between international norms and local communities – a challenge both for the educators and for the children being educated. When placed in a context marked by conflict and injustice, human rights education risks becoming both inefficient and counter-productive. Human rights education can have an important role in highlighting human rights violations in the local society and can empower students to stand up for their rights and the rights of others, but it can also lead to frustration and anger. The study also shows that when the context makes it difficult to follow the international ideals, the result is that human rights education practices are guided by and dependent on local norms.

Keywords: Human rights education, education, conflict, Palestinian schools.

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List of abbreviations

EAPPI	Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel
HRE	Human Rights Education
ICJ	International Court of Justice
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA oPt	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (occupied Palestinian territory)
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PA	The Palestinian Authority (also called the Palestinian National Authority)
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PCDC	Palestinian Curriculum Development Center
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	The United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

Introduction

Most people today acknowledge that the task of the education system is to go beyond just providing factual knowledge. It also needs to prepare the next generation for employment, and to ensure the economic and social development of society (World Bank, 2011). Furthermore, educators have a responsibility to ensure that children are brought up to become good citizens that can participate actively in a democratic society (Biesta & Lawy, 2006).

Building on this idea, education will be perceived as an important tool for strengthening respect for human rights. According to the visions of, for example, the World Programme for Human Rights Education (United Nations [UN] General Assembly, 2006), teaching children about human rights can be a bridge between human rights law and the local communities in which international norms are to be implemented.

The importance of education in human rights was stated already in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, but it was not until the 1990s that the concept of Human Rights Education [HRE] got a breakthrough in the educational discourse. The idea is that by participating in education in human rights, learners shall develop an understanding of the principles of human rights and, more importantly, become responsible citizens who enjoy and exercise their rights, and also respect and uphold the rights of others (UN General Assembly, 2006).

Over the last 20 years, there have been several United Nations [UN] instruments dealing with human rights education. On a global scale, numerous recommendations and guidelines regarding education and training on human rights have been publicised by various actors. There is, however, a long way from legal norms and visions to reality in the classroom.

This thesis is placed within the academic discipline of sociology of law, in which law is placed within the context of society. A cornerstone of sociology of law is that the rules enacted by the state are not necessarily what guides everyday

life. Correspondingly, international guidelines on human rights education may not be what is guiding activities in the classroom. Educators have policy documents to relate to, but teaching takes place in a social context influenced by a number of different factors.

A context marked by conflict and injustice is likely to have an effect on classroom activities. I therefore decided to take a closer look at the complex reality in the occupied Palestinian territory¹, in order to understand the challenges that the ongoing Israeli occupation and the resulting human rights violations add to the Palestinian education system. What happens in the classroom when the international norms on human rights and human rights education encounter the social and political reality on the ground?

The aim of the study

The purpose of this thesis is to increase knowledge about the implementation of human rights education, by contributing with perspectives on how a context marked by conflict and injustice can affect the norms and conditions for education in human rights.

By using the occupied Palestinian territory as a case study and focusing on areas especially affected by the Israeli occupation, I will report on the experiences of Palestinian educators and experts regarding teaching human rights in a conflict-troubled society.

The following research question has guided the study: What are the implications of the Israeli occupation on human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory, how do local educators navigate challenges resulting from

¹ The West Bank is the largest part of the Palestinian territories. Since 2004, the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) is referred to as "the occupied Palestinian territory" by the International Court of Justice. This is the name I will use for the area throughout the study. "The Palestinian territories" is the term I will use when I refer to the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza Strip. When I refer to sources which have used another name, such as Palestine, the term chosen by the author of the source may be used in some cases.

these implications, and how can this be understood in the context of relations between international policies and their local implementations?

The research focuses on both the formal education system and the non-formal educational sector, and is limited to schools and organisations working with children of primary and secondary school age in the occupied Palestinian territory. The study is limited to schools and organisations located in areas particularly affected by the Israeli occupation, such as Area C², the refugee camps³ and East Jerusalem⁴.

I have chosen to narrow the scope of the study by focusing solely on human rights education in relation to the occupation power. Classroom environment, culture, religion and attitudes in the local society are other factors that can potentially bring both opportunities and challenges to human rights education. In this study, however, these factors have been largely ignored.

Theoretical point of departure

The thesis is set within the framework of sociology of law, a discipline which offers theories for analysing and methods for describing the social reality in which rules of law are applied. Many studies in sociology of law focus on norms, a concept which is described by Hechter and Opp (2001) as “cultural phenomena

² The Oslo peace process divided the West Bank into three administrative divisions: Areas A, B and C. Area C covers 60% of the West Bank. Israel retains control of security and land management in Area C, and the Palestinian Authority is responsible for providing medical services and education to the Palestinian population, which is estimated to be between 200,000 and 300,000 people (B'Tselem, 2013).

³ During the 1948 war, more than 700,000 Palestinians fled from the areas that came to belong to Israel. Today, Palestinian refugees and their descendants are estimated at some five million people, many of whom still reside in refugee camps in the Palestinian territories and in the neighbouring countries. The West Bank is home to nearly 775,000 registered refugees, around a quarter of whom live in 19 camps (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees [UNRWA], 2015).

⁴ Between 1948 and June 1967, East Jerusalem was ruled by Jordan. Following the 1967 war, East Jerusalem came under Israeli rule and Israeli law was imposed there (B'Tselem, 2010). There are around 300,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs – Occupied Palestinian Territories [OCHA oPt], 2014).

that prescribe and proscribe behaviour in specific circumstances” (p. xi). Legal norms, which can include anything from international law and national legislation to local policies and the institutions that are responsible for implementing them, always operate in a social reality, and are only some of the components in a complex social game (Mathiesen, 2005). There can thus be major differences between the visions of policy makers, and the norms that guide everyday life. Mathiesen recognises that there are often significant limitations to the intended effects of laws, and laws can have unintended consequences when interpreted and implemented in a social context.

Eugen Ehrlich (1862-1922) is regarded by many as one of the founding scholars of modern sociology of law. Living and working in Bukowina in the multicultural Austrian Empire, where a number of ethnic groups lived side by side, he found that legal norms often played a minor role, in comparison with social norms, in how the society operated. As a counterbalance to official law, Ehrlich founded the expression “living law”, something he himself defines as “the law which dominates life itself even though it has not been posited in legal propositions” (Ehrlich, 1913/2001, p. 493). In the famous introduction in his book *Fundamental Principles of Sociology of Law* (1913/2001), Ehrlich offers a one-sentence summary of his work:

At the present as well as at any other time, the center of gravity of legal development lies not in legislation, nor in juristic science, nor in judicial decision, but in society itself (Ehrlich, 1913/2001, xiv)

A similar point of departure is taken in Michael Lipsky's book *Street-Level Bureaucracy - Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services* (2010), in which the author claims that policy-making must be viewed and understood from a bottom-up perspective. Looking at the public sector, such as health care, schools, police and social services, he identifies relatively large distances between the decision-makers high up in the hierarchy, and the administrators and other implementers who come into daily contact with the citizens. He therefore argues that policies, and especially the implementation of policy, are strongly influenced by the people at the bottom of the hierarchy, the “street-level bureaucrats”, in their contact with

the public.

The decision-making arenas are important, of course, but they do not represent the complete picture. To the mix of places where policies are made, one must add the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level workers (Lipsky, 2010, xiii).

According to Lipsky, one can therefore not understand policy-making as a process where decisions are taken at a higher level and then automatically implemented at a lower level. Instead, policy is transformed in the everyday operations and in the meetings between, for example, teachers (street-level bureaucrats) and their students (citizens) (Lipsky, 2010). He writes:

The phrase 'street-level bureaucracy' hints at this paradox. 'Bureaucracy' implies a set of rules and structures of authority; 'street-level' implies a distance from the center where authority presumably resides (Lipsky, 2010, xii).

The differences between the decisions and their implementation are fundamentally caused by tension between objectives and capabilities. Reasons why street-level workers do not, and cannot, act in accordance with the visions of the decision-makers, include lack of resources such as time and information, differences in how rules are interpreted, and other pressures that the workers are subject to. The “occupational and professional ideology” is another factor to take into consideration, not least when different goals compete (Lipsky, 2010).

Going back to the concept of norms, which was mentioned above, the policy created by the street-level bureaucrats can be described as social norms. Unlike legal norms, this policy is often spontaneous and unwritten, and is formed in the local contexts and through communication and interaction between people (Leo, 2013; Svensson, 2013; Wickenberg, 2013). One kind of social norms are professional norms, which are established by professional groups and are related to their profession. That schools can be arenas for the formation of social and professional norms is confirmed by Wickenberg (2013) in his studies on setters of norms in the education area.

By bringing these frameworks to the scene of human rights education, I will

aim to understand and obtain new knowledge on the norms that guide the Palestinian street-level bureaucrats in their human rights education practices, and how they experience the conditions of teaching human rights in a context marked by conflict and injustice.

Overview

The first part of the thesis provides a background to human rights education, particularly with reference to the need for a contextual understanding of the concept. The second section focuses on the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and gives an introduction to the struggles of the local education system. In the third section, the methodological point of departure is presented and the design of the case study is explained. The fourth section is based on interviews with Palestinian teachers, educators and experts, carried out in the spring and autumn of 2015. In the final section, I reflect on the findings in the light of the previous sections.

Part I - Human rights and education

An introduction to human rights

Major advances in the promotion of human rights came in the aftermath of the Second World War, partly in response to growing awareness of the horrors of the Holocaust. The United Nations Charter of 1945 was followed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. This introduced a new era of international commitment to 'the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family', often perceived as cornerstones of freedom, justice and peace (Donnelly, 2011).

The UDHR became, and still is, a standard-setting document. Its 30 articles define the ideals of the human rights system and identify a wide variety of rights for all people, without discrimination. Civil and political rights ensure equal participation in society and provide protection against abuse from the state. Economic, social and cultural rights seek to guarantee people access to necessary services and equal opportunities to participate in social and cultural life (UN General Assembly, 1948).

Although the ideals of the human rights system expressed in the UDHR are only normative in nature, these rights became legally binding by two international agreements that were adopted in 1966 and that most states have signed. Like the UDHR, these agreements address all human beings, but many groups still feel that they have been excluded, and that they have been systematically denied some of their rights. Over time, a new generation of additional human rights instruments has emerged and been adopted, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

Although a number of legally-binding documents have been adopted, signed and ratified by the majority of nation states, human rights law often meets

criticism for its perceived inefficiency (Donnelly, 2011). Work on establishing human rights norms has come a long way, but reports by various human rights organisations can confirm that human rights continue to be systematically violated around the world (see for example Amnesty International, 2015).

When violations to human rights occur, it is primarily the responsibility of the state to ensure that individuals obtain redress. In practice, this can be hard to achieve, and the human rights system still lacks mechanisms to prevent abuse of rights. Although international organisations, states and citizens speak out against human rights abuses, this rarely leads to any changes for the victims (Donnelly, 2011). For this reason, some people consider that the formulation of human rights provides a framework for claiming rights that have been denied, rather than a way of ensuring that rights are respected (Allen, 2013; Donnelly, 2011).

The role of education for promoting human rights

If human rights are to be practised, then people must know about them. This was recognised from the beginning by the international community. A section on human rights education was included in the UDHR. The second paragraph of Article 26 of the declaration states that:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (UN General Assembly, 1948, art. 26:2).

The importance of education for the dissemination of human rights is also expressed in a number of other human rights instruments, including but not limited to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (article 29), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (article 7) and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (article 10).

Education in human rights made a slow start, but has gained in popularity in

recent years (Claude, 2005; Phillips & Gready, 2013). Human rights education, often abbreviated as HRE, is now delivered to various audiences by a wide variety of actors. Apart from school children, who are the focus of this thesis, the target group of the programmes can include everyone from government officials, parliamentarians, police, lawyers and civil servants to researchers, journalists, activists and advocates. Universities offer special human rights courses and study programmes, and community centres all over the world are involved in various projects on human rights training (Phillips & Gready, 2013). Activities aiming to raise awareness about human rights can also include for example TV and radio advertisements (Holland, 2011).

International norms on human rights education

Many different organisations have been, and still are, involved in human rights education. However, it is the UN that has taken the leading role in defining and promoting the concept.

The breakthrough for human rights education in the educational discourse came in 1993, when the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna recognised the role of education for “the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace” (UN General Assembly, 1993, p. 43). It called on all states and institutions to include subjects such as human rights and democracy in both formal and non-formal education settings.

The years 1995-2004 were declared the Decade for Human Rights Education by the UN. Human rights education was defined as “training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights...” and should form a part of both formal education and non-formal learning, preferably through participatory and interactive methods (UN General Assembly, 1996). Nearly identical to the wording of UDHR §26 (2), the Plan of Action stated that education on human rights should be directed to:

- (a) The strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;

- (c) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society;
- (e) The furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (UN General Assembly, 1996).

The Decade for HRE was followed in 2005 by the World Programme for HRE, an equally ambitious project aiming to build on what had been achieved during the Decade. The first phase of the programme (2005-2009) emphasised human rights education in primary and secondary school systems. It was followed by a second phase of the programme, focusing on higher education as well as teachers, civil servants and other professionals. The second phase finished in 2014. In the third phase, running from 2015 to 2019, emphasis is placed on human rights training for journalists and other media professionals (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], n.d.).

As in the preceding Decade for HRE, the World Programme recognised that it is not enough just to provide knowledge about human rights. Skills and attitudes are also essential components in order to develop rights respecting citizens. The Plan of Action for the first phase of the programme states:

A comprehensive education in human rights not only provides knowledge about human rights and the mechanisms that protect them, but also imparts the skills needed to promote, defend and apply human rights in daily life. Human rights education fosters the attitudes and behaviours needed to uphold human rights for all members of society (UN General Assembly, 2006, p. 1).

The 2011 Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training also made it clear that learning about human rights is important, but is not enough. The 2011 Declaration is the most recent of the number of documents and initiatives that shed light on the UN's vision for human rights education. Article 2 (2) of the declaration states that human rights education and training involves education about, through and for human rights:

- (a) Education about human rights, which includes providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin

them and the mechanisms for their protection;

(b) Education through human rights, which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners;

(c) Education for human rights, which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others. (UN General Assembly, 2011).

These ideals on human rights education have been translated into a number of guidelines and teacher's handbooks on how human rights education should be carried out in the classroom. One of the objectives of the Decade for Human Rights Education was to coordinate the development of education material on human rights (UN General Assembly, 1996). Various organisations and bodies, including but not limited to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], the European Council, the Asia Pacific Forum and Amnesty International, have been – and in some cases still are – active in providing resources and support for human rights education.

The road from the conventions to the classroom

National initiatives encouraged

The UN definition of human rights education mirrors the international human rights norms, as stated in the UDHR and associated documents, and is largely directed at member states and national policymakers (Bajaj, 2011). However, as Paula Gerber points out in her 2008 dissertation on human rights education in Australia and the USA, there is a long road from the conventions to the classroom. Building on a socio-legal perspective, Gerber argues that the journey from international law to the schools is not a one-way street, but should be seen as a complicated, multi-dimensional and multi-directional process. The norms must pass international, national and regional levels before reaching the classroom (Gerber, 2008).

Previous research has shown that the norms on human rights education often fail to get past the international level (Bajaj, 2011; Gerber, 2011; Oomen, 2013). A key component in UN policies on human rights education is the importance of national initiatives. In the Decade for HRE, and also in the first phase of the World Programme for HRE, governments were asked to formulate national action plans for human rights education, and to implement these policies in their school systems (UN General Assembly 1996; 2006). However, although the UN initiatives on human rights education were agreed upon worldwide, most member states did not take action to implement them locally. According to the evaluation of the first phase of the World Programme, only 19 member states formulated plans for the implementation of human rights education (UN General Assembly, 2010).

The 2011 Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training does not provide any strong incentives for governments to implement human rights education policies in their schools. Analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the declaration, Gerber (2011) argues that it could have included a forceful call to states and non-governmental actors to take proactive steps to achieve human rights education. Instead, the preamble only states that the motivation of the declaration is to:

... send a strong signal to the international community to strengthen all efforts in human rights education and training through a collective commitment by all stakeholders (UN General Assembly, 2011).

When governments do not take any formal steps to implement human rights education on a local level, the result can be ad hoc educational activities. In Scotland, there is no comprehensive national strategy for human rights. Struthers (2015) concludes that this has resulted in the implementation of human rights education being “inconsistent and frequently lacking the depth required by a number of the relevant international provisions” (p.61).

The bottom-up process

The Plan of Action for the first phase of the World Programme for HRE states that

the ministries of education, or equivalent institutions, bear the main responsibility for the implementation of education activities related to human rights. However, it also recognises the importance of other international and local actors. This is particularly visible in the Plan of Action for the Decade for HRE, which builds on the idea that partnerships between international organisations, governments, civil society and individuals are necessary for realising the goals of the Decade, and it urges non-governmental organisations to establish and implement human rights education programmes (UN General Assembly, 1996).

The influence of international legal norms on local policies is often presented as a top-down process. However, there is also a bottom-up process, when actors in the local society, such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals, can affect policies (Gerber, 2008). Another bottom-up process is when NGOs organise human rights training themselves and thus impact the way human rights are disseminated in the local society (Bajaj, 2011; Coysh, 2014).

Barbara Oomen (2013) reflects on the key disseminating role of civil society in human rights education. Drawing on examples from the Netherlands, where the government has been reluctant to develop national policies on human rights education, she has found that NGOs play an important role in the implementation of education in human rights. The involvement of NGOs and other actors in human rights education can be perceived as something both positive and negative. Oomen points out that NGOs involved in human rights education often have their own specific focus, which will affect the content of the training activities. It is important to be aware of this. On the other hand, Gerber (2008) argues, it is encouraging to see that local movements can have an effect on human rights education practices, and can get involved in educational activities when they consider that the school system fails to provide a lead.

Individuals play a key role

The implementation of human rights education in the classroom can be further influenced by, or even be dependent on, the training and attitudes of individual

teachers and educators. Bajaj (2011) is one of several scholars arguing for the important role of teachers in shaping human rights education practices, recognising that teachers do not ‘simply transmit human rights instruction’.

This claim is supported by an evaluation of human rights education in Irish primary schools, where the Irish Human Rights Commission noted that the implementation of human rights education was to a large extent dependent on committed teachers and principals, and on their will and capacity (Irish Human Rights Commission, 2011).

According to Gerber, the interest and motivations of individual teachers can have a large impact, even if there are national policies in place (Gerber, 2006; 2008). In a study that she conducted on human rights education, she found that teachers...

...were motivated by deeply private reasons that had nothing to do with what the UN mandated, or what the Department of Education specified in the curriculum frameworks, or even what their school policies dictated. Rather they were driven to raise issues of human rights in their classes because of their own personal background and experience (Gerber, 2006).

Contextualising human rights education

Teaching “through” human rights

Another factor which affects the implementation of activities related to human rights education is the context in which it takes place. Gert Biesta, a scholar widely referred to on matters of normative education and, in particular, on education and democracy, writes in a paper from 2003 that although there are good reasons to support education about democracy, only limited results can be reached solely by teaching about democracy. Students learn not only from what they are taught, but also from the actual situations in which they are involved.

A similar idea is found within the human rights education discourse. As previously mentioned, the 2011 Declaration on Human Rights Education and

Training states that human rights education involves education “through” human rights – a practice “which includes learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners” (UN General Assembly, 2011).

One measure to allow children to gain knowledge about human rights “through” human rights is a rights-respecting school environment. However, as Biesta points out, it is important to remember that human rights education also takes place outside of the school (Biesta, 2003). What children learn, for example, in the family, in the street or when surfing the web, is often different from, or even in contradiction with, what they learn in school (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). If these environments do not support what the children learn about human rights in school, there is likely to be a negative effect on students' attitudes and values with respect to human rights, even if the school has exemplary course materials and curricula on the subject.

An example of how the local context can make human rights education ineffective comes from Tracey Holland (1998) and her experiences of teaching human rights to street children. She gives an example of a meeting between herself and a twelve-year-old Jamaican street boy named Bull, who had been jailed after searching for food among the garbage and had then been badly treated in jail.

As much as I wanted to tell Bull about the rights he had that would protect him from that sort of thing in the future, I knew it would be virtually impossible to convince this boy, who had experienced everything *but* having rights, that he really did have them. Whatever concrete rights he had were known to him only by their absence (Holland, 1998, p. 178).

Thus, the background of the students can be crucial for their ability to grasp the subject matter. Holland writes:

...anyone attempting to teach human rights to marginalized persons quickly realizes that the learners find the topic not just confusing and hard to assimilate, but often even menacing and self-denigrating as well (Holland, 1998, p. 176).

It is not necessarily the groups that are repressed or marginalised that will suffer from ineffective human rights education. Another example illustrating the

challenges that the local context can bring to human rights education comes from Neve Gordon, an Israeli researcher focusing on the geography and the political context of human rights education, using Israel as a case study. Looking at conditions which can ‘enable or hinder meaningful HRE’, he found that there is a gap between the human rights values and the attitudes of Jewish youth, who believe that Palestinian citizens in Israel should not enjoy equal rights to those of the Jewish citizens. Gordon believes that the reason behind this is that the political context and the dominant ideologies in the society can work against the assumptions of the human rights instruments and thus hinder the development of human rights values and norms in a community (Gordon, 2012).

Making human rights education culturally relevant

Starting from the local context can also be an important pedagogical tool in learning “about” human rights. The Plan of Action for the first phase of the World Programme for HRE emphasised the importance of considering the local context in which human rights education activities are carried out. In the foreword, it is stated that...

... activities should be practical, relating human rights to learners’ real-life experience and enabling them to build on human rights principles found in their own cultural context. (UN, General Assembly, 2006, p. 1).

Correspondingly, some scholars in the human rights education field argue that the human rights curriculum must be adapted to the specific society in which it is being applied (Coysh, 2014; Gordon, 2012; Struthers, 2015).

However, the use of contextually relevant examples in human rights education can give rise to challenges. In a UNESCO report from 2011, Dolan, Gundara and King write that when teaching about human rights, there can be a clear gap between “the ideals and aspirations enshrined in international human rights instruments” and “the political and social realities” (Dolan, Gundara & King, 2011, p. 15).

In the OHCHR practical guide on human rights education, the authors

highlight the need for a contextual approach in teaching human rights, stating that:

'Facts' and 'fundamentals', even the best-selected ones, are not enough to build a culture of human rights. For these documents to have more than intellectual significance, students need to approach them from the perspective of their real-life experience and grapple with them in terms of their own understanding of justice, freedom and equity (OHCHR, 2004. p. 20).

It is necessary to consider what this actually means on the ground. This becomes problematic when the children have never experienced the “justice, freedom and equity” which they should use to understand the international human rights instruments.

One example of how the local context in human rights education can affect students' perceptions of human rights comes from a study on secondary schools in Turkey, where Çayır & Bağlı (2011) found that the human rights courses they looked into had a very little empowering effect. On the contrary, learning about human rights made the students feel powerless against violations of human rights. The authors conclude that although the courses may have led to some awareness about human rights, they did not help the students to acquire the skills needed to defend human rights or to cope with the problems. “Rather, their belief or observation that human rights are not obeyed led them to perceive the world as merciless, violent and competitive” (Çayır & Bağlı, 2011, p. 11).

What human rights education is and does – different perspectives

Education “for” human rights

Both the Decade for HRE and the subsequent World Programme for HRE place emphasis on the skills, attitudes, and behaviours that are needed to promote, apply and uphold human rights in daily life. The more recent Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training specifically points out that human rights education is not only about knowledge but also about action. It emphasises that human rights

education must involve education “for” human rights, “which includes empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others” (UN General Assembly, 2011).

Although there is broad consensus that successful human rights education must include teaching and learning for human rights, there is no common picture of what exactly this involves. An observant reader of the UN guidelines will find that the purpose of human rights education differs between the different instruments. The 2011 declaration suggests that children should receive human rights education in order to ‘enjoy and exercise their rights’. The World Programme for HRE, on the other hand, has a more activist tone, encouraging children to ‘to defend and promote human rights’ (UN General Assembly, 2006, p. 12). Corresponding differences can be found in the literature and guidelines on human rights education. It is a recurrent theme in previous research on the topic that there are many definitions of human rights education and of its purpose (see for example Bajaj, 2011; Coysh, 2014; Oomen, 2013; Struthers, 2015).

Empowerment or social cohesion?

At the one end of the spectrum, education in human rights is perceived to be connected to social cohesion, and can be linked to concepts such as democracy, equality and tolerance. An example is the conceptualisation of human rights education in the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, which recognised the role of education for “the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace” (UN General Assembly, 1993, p. 43).

Some writers draw direct parallels between human rights education and non-violent conflict resolution. For example, Reimers and Chung (2010) argue that “Human rights education provides individuals with ways to value peace over violence and to find non-violent forms of conflict resolution” (p. 506). However, Tracey Holland, discussing the role of human rights education in peacebuilding, recognises that this may not be as easy as it sounds. She gives an example in

which two human rights education workers perceive their role as peacemakers as complex:

As human rights educators, we are often involved in the creation of disputes. This is not because we want more disputes, but rather because the nature of our work calls attention to injuries and raises peoples' awareness that their injuries are related to social, political and economic injustices and inequities (Morris & Aw, 2004, in Holland, 2011, p. 90).

Sometimes, there is not even a clear link between human rights education and human rights. Philip and Gready (2013) note that these are sometimes seen as two different worlds, where human rights education practices stand apart from the international human rights framework, and concepts such as 'equality' and 'non-discrimination' risk being “invoked endlessly to the point of imprecision” (p. 217). Gerber (2006) comes to a similar conclusion after interviewing teachers on how they perceive human rights, finding that “teachers see human rights education not in terms of rights articulated in legal instruments, but rather about using the philosophy of human rights to create better human beings”.

Similarly, in a report on human rights education in Ireland, Waldron et al. (2011) found that although there are plenty of activities in Irish classrooms that are described as related to human rights, “these activities tend not to be connected explicitly to human rights language and principles” (p. 4). They conclude that the educational activities in the schools they researched tended to emphasise improved social cohesion and responsibility, rather than empowerment and how to challenge current social structures.

Struthers (2015) and Gerber (2006) both note that NGOs tend to take a much more activist tone than governments on the purpose of human rights education. NGOs more often recognise the transformative potential of human rights education. A scholar in favour of the more activist view of the human rights education concept is Reeta Toivanen. She criticises the strong tendency to interpret human rights education as a way to teach children about correct behaviour and to “make good and decent citizens who can vote and sort the garbage...”. Instead, she argues, human rights education should “seek to challenge

the prevailing political and social order” (Toivanen, 2009, p. 37).

The transformative potential of human rights education can be particularly important for people from marginalised or repressed groups. Bajaj (2011) identifies three different types of human rights education, based on different underlying ideological orientations. One of these is HRE for Transformative Action, where the students learn to take action against injustices. Bajaj explains what should be included in such a curriculum:

...content might include examples of social injustice that learners collect from their own homes or communities; values and skills might include solidarity with victims, equality, and justice; and actions might include collective protest, intervening in situations of abuse, and joining NGOs or social movements to advance greater participation and inclusion (Bajaj, 2011, p. 494)

This interpretation of human rights education stands in contrast to the other two types that Bajaj identifies, which she calls HRE for Global Citizenship and HRE for Coexistence. The aim of HRE for Global Citizenship is to “provide learners with membership to an international community through fostering knowledge and skills related to universal values and standards”. HRE for Coexistence “focuses on the inter-personal and inter-group aspects of rights”, and can be useful in conflict-troubled contexts where there are disputes between different ethnic groups (Bajaj, 2011, p. 489-490).

Paula Gerber also argues for the transformative role of human rights education. In her paper *Black Rights/White Curriculum: Human Rights Education for Indigenous Peoples* (2004), she looked at human rights education for indigenous people in Australia. She argues that the international instruments on human rights education “appear to have been drafted with the dominant culture in mind” (p. 4). Gerber is highly critical of the concept of tolerance. She argues that tolerance, often defined as 'the ability to endure disagreeable circumstances', is unsuitable with respect to indigenous people. People who have been abused should not be asked to learn how to respect and tolerate others. Instead, Gerber argues, one of the aims of human rights education for indigenous groups should be empowerment. They should learn how to claim their rights and how to

participate in lobbying for human rights (Gerber, 2004).

Summary

Passing on knowledge about human rights is not as straightforward as it might seem at first sight. Many scholars agree that a complex reality lies behind the ideals of human rights education, as stated in the UN instruments. They claim that there is no straight path from international norms to local classrooms (Bajaj, 2011; Gerber, 2008; Oomen, 2013). In many countries, there is a lack of national coordination, and as a result the provision of human rights education is left to initiatives undertaken by non-governmental organisations and by individuals (Irish Human Rights Commission, 2011; Oomen, 2013; Struthers, 2015)

The myriad different actors involved in human rights education are not the only reason why human rights education can take different forms from those envisaged by the drafters of the UN instruments. This section has also shown how human rights education practices can be influenced not only by the people implementing the activities, but also by the context in which they take place (Biesta, 2003; Holland, 1998), and by how the concept of human rights education is perceived by its practitioners (Bajaj, 2011).

This literature review has revealed that the local context in which human rights education takes place can provide many challenges for educators. According to the 2011 UN Declaration on HRE, education in human rights should ideally be taught “about”, “for” and “through” human rights, but factors in the local context can make the implementation of these three dimensions problematic. When contextually relevant examples are used, the gaps between human rights visions and the reality on the ground become obvious (Dolan, Gundara & King, 2011). Furthermore, children learn not only from the school environment, but also from the situations in which they are involved (Biesta, 2003; Gordon, 2012). This means that factors in the local community and environment can render human rights education ineffective or, in the worst case, even counter-productive.

Another conclusion from an analysis of the UN instruments on human rights education and of the literature on the topic is that education in human rights takes many different forms. The broad and somewhat diverging definitions of human rights education provided by the UN allow for interpretations made by national policymakers, NGOs and individual educators. Some perceive human rights education as being necessarily related to social cohesion, tolerance and fostering good citizenship (Reimers & Chung, 2010; Waldron et al, 2011). Others recognise the transformative potential of human rights education, perceiving it as a way of putting human rights violations on the table and empowering children and young people to stand up for their rights and for the rights of others (Gerber, 2004; Toivanen, 2009).

Human rights education carried out by different actors with different agendas, who sometimes choose to diverge from the international or national norms, is in danger of being inconsistent, and human rights education practices are in danger of lacking depth (Oomen, 2013; Struthers, 2015). However, different conceptualisations and perceptions of human rights education should not necessarily be perceived as something negative. Toivanen (2009) points at a dilemma that can arise when a single actor dictates the terms for human rights education. If the formal education sector takes a leading role, the content of the human rights education will most likely mirror official values, and there will be little possibility of challenging existing norms and practices. A local NGO leading the way may lead to an excessively narrow focus, while an international organisation may be unable to address the contextual issues accurately (Toivanen, 2009).

Part II - The research question in its context

In order to understand human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory, it is vital to get an idea of the context and the human rights situation in the area. What will be discussed in the later parts of this thesis is closely connected to the historical and political situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories. In this chapter, I will therefore provide background information on the Palestinian territories and on the Palestinian education system, and thereby offer a basis from which the rest of the study can be understood.

Brief history and current political situation

The Palestinians have never had a state of their own. After the Ottoman Period, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the area that is today recognised as the State of Israel fell under British administration. In 1948, the State of Israel was established on what was regarded by many as being Palestinian land. Since 1967, Israel has occupied the Palestinian territories, which consist of the West Bank (including East Jerusalem) and the Gaza strip. The relations between the Palestinian people and Israeli people have undergone various phases, including both armed struggle and dialogue, and a peaceful, lasting solution to the conflict seems far away (Quigley, 2005).

In the early 1990s, the Oslo accords were negotiated; these consisted of several agreements that would seek to lay the foundations for a final peace agreement. They declared that a Palestinian self-governance would be established and that the Israeli military should withdraw from the Palestinian territories (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, 1993). Although more than twenty years have passed since the agreements, Israel still controls security and land management in around 60% of the West Bank, which belongs to administrative division Area C (World Bank, 2013).

By 1987, the Palestinian resistance had developed into the Palestinian

uprising (intifada), a grass-roots movement that largely consisted of non-violent civil disobedience against Israeli rule. This intifada was violently crushed by Israeli forces. To the disappointment of the Palestinians, the state they had been hoping for after the Oslo accords was never established. In 2000, a second Intifada broke out, much more violent than the first one. A number of Palestinian suicide attacks in Israel followed, resulting in an increasing Israeli military presence in the Palestinian territories (Garthon, 2008).

Another source of Palestinian frustration is that Israel has constructed a number of Jewish settlements in the Palestinian areas. Today, there are more than half a million settlers in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. Although the settlements are illegal under international law, and are often described as counterproductive to peace, Israel continues to expand its current settlements and build new ones (B'Tselem, 2015). There are two different legal systems in place, for settlers and for Palestinians, although both groups live in separate parts of the same place. The settlers live under Israeli civil law, and the Palestinians under Israeli military law, which according to a 2010 Human Rights Watch report “violates the fundamental prohibition against discrimination under human rights law”. Equally problematic are the reports of armed settlers clashing with their Palestinian neighbours (OHCHR, 2013).

In 2002, the construction of a separation barrier between Israel and the West Bank began, making Israel and Jerusalem (the city which the Palestinians consider to be their capital) inaccessible to many Palestinians (OCHA oPt, 2013). The wall has been highly criticised, and the International Court of Justice [ICJ] has established that parts of it violate Israel’s obligations under international law (ICJ, 2004). A wall has also been built around the Gaza strip, and although all Israeli troops and settlers were withdrawn from Gaza in 2005, Israel still controls the entry and exit of people and goods to the area (Garthon, 2008).

Today, the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza are separated not just geographically, but also politically. The nationalist Fateh movement dominates the Palestinian Authority, which is based in Ramallah and rules the West Bank. The

Islamist movement Hamas has ruled the Gaza strip since 2007 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016). There are around 300,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, which has been ruled de facto by Israel since 1967 (OCHA oPt, 2014).

Palestinian society is characterized by an active civil society. During the troubled history of the Palestinian territories, NGOs have played an important role in providing services to the Palestinians in the absence of a state or authority, in particular prior to the Oslo accords (Abdel Shaft, 2004).

Refugees and the right of return

Around thirty percent of the population in the West Bank are defined as refugees (UNRWA, 2015). During the 1948 war, more than 700,000 Palestinians fled from the areas that came to belong to Israel. Today, Palestinian refugees and their descendants are estimated to number some five million people, many of whom still reside in refugee camps in the Palestinian territories and in the neighbouring countries. The camps that are located in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, as well as the camps in the occupied Palestinian territories, are mainly managed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East [UNRWA]. Many Palestinians depend on UNRWA for their basic needs, not least education, and UNRWA runs a large number of schools in the region (Bocco, 2010).

According to Article 11 of UN resolution 194, Palestinian refugees “wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date...” (UN General Assembly, 1948). Israel has until now refused to allow the refugees' right of return, while the Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian leadership refuse to give up demands for this right. Although nearly 70 years have passed, the discourse of right of return is deeply embedded in the Palestinian refugee camps (Gren, 2009).

The current human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory

In her book *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights - Cynicism and Politics in*

Occupied Palestine (2013), Lori Allen describes Palestinian history as “marked by the human rights system's long years of failure to protect the Palestinians” (p. 21). The Palestinian people are subject to a number of human rights violations, which are being documented by both local and international human rights organisations. In their 2014/2015 international report, Amnesty highlights its key concerns, and documents a number of Israeli violations of the human rights of the Palestinians living in the West Bank. These include, but are not limited to, unlawful killing of Palestinian protesters (including children), detention without trial, torture, severe restrictions on freedom of movement, forced eviction and house demolitions (Amnesty International, 2015).

Allen (2013) is very critical toward what she describes as the “human rights industry” in the occupied Palestinian territory, and argues that the efforts of the human rights industry have not resulted in any major improvement to the political or social situation in the area. She suggests that, for many Palestinians, the lack of results, the 'unfulfilled promises' and the 'unsuccessful battles' have instead turned human rights into an object of cynicism.

However, she recognises that human rights can provide a language for the Palestinians to condemn the Israeli occupation and Israeli actions. The language of human rights, which has been an important part of the resistance over the last 30 years, is widely used in the Palestinian territories, and provides a legitimate way for the Palestinians to defend themselves against violations and abuse (Allen, 2013).

Human rights violations directed at children

Children in the occupied Palestinian territory will undoubtedly be influenced by the conflict. Many of the gross human rights violations also affect children. The Israeli occupation and presence, particularly the checkpoints, the soldiers and the settlers, make everyday life for Palestinian children uncertain. The United Nations Children’s Fund [UNICEF] (2010) reports:

In OPT, occupation policies and practices actively increase the vulnerability of children to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. The Occupied Palestinian Territory is a place where children may become, deliberately or incidentally, the victims of extreme acts of violence and brutality, such as targeted and/or negligent killings, indiscriminate attacks on their homes, schools, camps and neighbourhoods, maiming, and other forms of physical and psychological violence – including torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, house demolitions, land confiscation and obstruction of livelihoods, discrimination and harassment (UNICEF, 2010, p. 21).

UNICEF (2010) further reports that a large number of children and adolescents feel anxiety and fear of losing their homes, and suffer from sleep disorders.

Children are injured in clashes with Israeli security forces (UNICEF, 2015) and experience visits from Israeli soldiers both in their homes and in their schools (EAPPI, 2013; UNICEF, 2013). Settler violence is also an increasing problem, and incidents involving groups of Israeli settlers against Palestinian children include assaults, beatings, shootings, stone throwing and hit-and-run attacks (UNICEF, 2010). Participants in the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel [EAPPI] writes in a report from 2013 that children are especially vulnerable on the way to and from school, where they are exposed to settler violence and face military checkpoints, resulting in delays and harassment during searches.

Children as young as 12 years of age (at the time of sentencing) can be imprisoned for up to six months, and older children can face life sentences. From the age of 16 they are regarded as adults, rather than children (UNICEF, 2013). There have been reports of the use of torture on children in Israeli detention (Human Rights Watch, 2015). UNICEF (2010) reports that Palestinian children are sometimes subjected to 'administrative detention', which means that they can be detained without charge or trial.

It should be pointed out that not all violations of human rights and children's rights in the occupied Palestinian territories can be blamed on the occupying power. According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics [PCBS], many Palestinian children are exposed to violence both at home and at school (PCBS,

2011). The occurrence of early marriages and child labour within the Palestinian territories are two other issues that concern UNICEF (2010).

Education in the Palestinian territories

Throughout their complex history, the Palestinians have had a strong tradition of education. However, the Palestinians did not get control over their own education system until recent times (Nicolai, 2007). During its complex history, the education system in Palestine has been managed by multiple actors, including the rulers of the Ottoman Empire and, more recently, the British. Between 1948 and 1967, Jordan ruled in the West Bank and Egypt ruled in the Gaza Strip, and both introduced their own curricula. When the Israelis occupied the Palestinian territories after the Six Day War in 1967, they retained the Jordanian and Egyptian curriculum with minimal changes, although some of the content in the textbooks was censored in accordance with Israeli interests (Nicolai, 2007).

Although many Palestinians are highly critical of the Oslo accords, they often concede that they led to at least one good thing: they allowed the Palestinians to take control of their own education system. Nicolai (2007) reports that, as a result of the Oslo accords, a Ministry of Education and Higher Education [MoEHE] was set up as a part of the newly-created Palestinian Authority [PA]. The Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre [PCDC] was established, which immediately set out to create a Palestinian curriculum and its associated textbooks. Two new subjects were introduced: national education and civic education. Civic education is taught in grades 1-9, and it includes human rights concepts and a number of other topics related to society (UNESCO, 2006).

There is an ongoing debate about textbooks in the Palestinian territories. The topic has received plenty of attention, and a large number of reports and studies of varying scope and focus have been published by Palestinian, Israeli and international organisations, institutes and individuals (Nicolai, 2007). A number of allegations have been made against the Palestinian curriculum and textbooks,

many of them based on claims that the curriculum and the textbooks 'instil hatred of Israel and Jews', Brown (2001) writes. Others do not go so far, but as Pina (2005) notes, some claim that the Palestinian textbooks fail to support values such as tolerance and diversity. In a thorough examination of the textbooks, Pina reported that the textbooks used in the Palestinian territories do in fact include representations of peace and tolerance, but that these are general statements and avoid mentioning Israel.

Today, Palestinian schools are run by the PA through the MoEHE, by UNRWA, or by private actors. All schools use the PA textbooks. There are also a number of grass-root organisations and international NGOs involved in the education system (Teacher Creativity Center, 2010).

The Israeli perspective

This chapter has been written from the 'Palestinian perspective'. Although it has been systematically substantiated by citations, above all from United Nations and other human right organisations, it would be comprehensively rejected and denied by official Israeli sources. The Israeli narrative is that, after the Holocaust, the State of Israel was legitimately established, with protection for the rights of the indigenous Palestinians, but that the Palestinians have systematically attempted to undermine and sabotage the State of Israel. According to the Israeli narrative, Israel has exercised its right to self-protection, with restraint, under extreme provocation, and should be seen as a victim and not an oppressor (Dajani Daudi & Barakat, 2013).

Israeli perspectives form no part of this thesis, but are briefly mentioned here as an aspect of the context within which human rights education is carried out in the Palestinian territories.

Summary

The setting for the empirical study is largely characterized by conflict, oppression and restrictions. The prolonged conflict in the area has had many implications for Palestinian children, and has resulted in numerous and gross violations of human rights (UNICEF 2010, 2013).

This section has also shed light on the widespread use of human rights discourse in Palestinian society, which has been an important aspect of the resistance (Allen, 2013). This discourse also includes the right of return, a comprehension of human rights which applies specifically to the Palestinian refugees (Gren, 2007). However, the relation between Palestinians and the human rights system is complicated. Allen (2013) states that human rights law has failed to make the situation better for the Palestinians, and the lack of results has instead turned the human rights system into an object of cynicism.

In the previous section, it was made clear that the local context will affect the norms and conditions for education in human rights (Gordon, 2012; Holland, 1998). A society such as the occupied Palestinian territory, which is marked by conflict and injustice, will provide many challenges for educators. When drawing on contextually relevant examples in human rights education practices, the gaps between human rights visions and the actual situation for the Palestinian children are likely to become obvious. Furthermore, as was stated in the previous section, children learn not only from the school environment, but also from the situations in which they are involved (Biesta, 2003). That many Palestinian children have been subject to gross human rights violations is likely to have implications for their understanding of human rights and for their willingness to engage in human rights education.

The ongoing debates about Palestinian textbooks draw attention to the fact that both Israeli and international organisations are interested in, and sometimes highly critical of, what Palestinian children are taught in school (Nicolai, 2007). Although the Palestinians have their own education system with their own curricula and textbooks, it is possible that international pressure on Palestinian

education providers can have an effect on the educational processes and not least on human rights education in the area.

Part III– Method and methodology

The empirical part of this research project was carried out as a case study in the occupied Palestinian territory. In order to describe the experiences of teaching human rights in a conflict-troubled society, I interviewed a number of teachers, community educators and experts. In this section, I describe the methodological points of departure, explain the design of the case study and give details on how the data was gathered.

My relation to the empirical data

The study builds on an exploratory approach. In their guidelines on research in the occupied Palestinian territory, Abdul Majeed and Sakka (2014) recommend that foreign researchers use local sources and not “depend only on stereotypical ideas and Orientalist references to understand the Palestinian case” (p. 96). Their recommendations have guided the research process, and I have made sure to capture the respondents' own views on both the researched topic and the environment.

In order to avoid being dependent on pre-conceptions and on Western interpretations of the topic, I entered the field early - in fact, I entered the field before I even knew exactly what I wanted to study. As in the case of most students, the choice of topic, the aim of the study and the research questions were not a one-off decision. Although I had decided to research the Palestinian education system from a sociology of law point of view, it was not until I had spent over a month in the occupied Palestinian territory and had already conducted some interviews that I decided to focus specifically on human rights education, as its role within the local context caught my curiosity.

I did two field visits to the occupied Palestinian territory, in February to April 2015 and October to November in 2015. During these periods I collected data in various forms, both through conducting formal interviews and by visiting

various organisations, having informal chats with friends, listening to lectures and presentations, and reading reports and previous research. Most of this did not make its way into the final analysis, but allowed me to develop a deeper understanding for both the topic and the political and social context

The collection of data

The empirical material focuses mainly upon findings from interviews with 26 people: teachers and school leaders from eight schools in refugee camps, East Jerusalem and Area C, officials from the Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre [PCDC] and Ministry of Education and Higher Education [MoEHE], members of staff in international organisations working in the occupied Palestinian territory, and representatives from Palestinian grass root organisations and community education centres.

List of interviewees:

- Educator, community centre (1) in a refugee camp
- Educator, community centre (2) in a refugee camp
- Teacher and principal, school (1) in East Jerusalem
- Teacher, school (2) in East Jerusalem
- Teacher and principal, school (3) in Area C
- Teacher and principal, school (4) in Area C
- Teacher and principal, school (5) in Area C
- Principal, school (6) in Area C
- Teacher and principal, school (7) in a refugee camp
- Teacher and principal, school (8) in a refugee camp
- Three officials, Palestinian Curriculum Development Centre [PCDC]
- Official, Ministry of Education and Higher Research [MoEHE]
- Two members of staff, international organisation (1)
- Member of staff, international organisation (2)
- Director, local organisation (1)
- Director, local organisation (2)
- Director, local organisation (3)

I got in touch with the interviewees through the MoEHE (schools located in Area C and East Jerusalem) and through informal contacts (refugee camp schools, community centres and NGOs). The interviewees were approached because of their involvement with issues that in one way or another can be related to human rights education, and because of their activity in areas of the occupied Palestinian territories which are especially vulnerable in relation to the Israeli occupation.

The purpose of the interviews was to explore the implementation of human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory, the implications of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian human rights education, and how local educators navigate challenges resulting from these implications.

I did not start from any particular definition of human rights education, but instead tried to capture the respondents' own views on what education in human rights includes, resulting in different interpretations of the concept.

Although the interviews focused on the themes of the research, they were not structured with standardised questions. All interviews were different and many of the methodological decisions were made during the interviews. The interviews often seemed like conversations rather than interviews, but they were not completely non-directed. In accordance with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) recommendations, I led the interviewees toward certain themes, but not toward specific opinions on these themes. The interviews built on each other; each conversation led to new insights for me, which were used and processed in the subsequent interviews.

The interview questions varied, depending on the background and the role of the person I interviewed, what organisation or institution he or she represented, and what stage of the research I was at. Questions that came up in nearly all of the interviews regarded how education in human rights was implemented in the particular organisation or institution. I further asked about the perceived aims of human rights education and the challenges that result from the conflict. My interest was in both the general and the specific, and I therefore asked general questions and also sought for specific examples.

The interviews were held in English. When translation from Arabic was needed, this was provided by an English-speaking member from the same school or organisation.

I chose not to record the interviews. Instead, I took field notes, consisting of main points or full sentences, depending on the need. I am used to conducting interviews and write fast enough to reproduce long statements without delay. In the instances where the interviewee said something which I wanted to cite but did not initially write down, I explained that I would like to cite the interviewee on what she/he had just said, and asked if they could repeat. If I was unsure whether I had got a statement right, I checked it with the interviewee before I left. Through experience, I have found that people can find themselves more comfortable in interviews which are not being recorded, as the interviewer can make a point of putting the pen down when the interviewee wants to say things in confidence. Also, by avoiding recording an interview, anonymity can be better assured. Some of the interviewees did not have the permission of their manager to speak to me, but wanted to speak anyway, as they found the topic of the study important. When taking notes, I would just leave identifiable details out, making it very difficult for someone else than me to trace the individual or organisation behind the quotes.

The analysis of the data

Data collection and data analysis were closely knitted together, and were done to a considerable extent at the same time. I focused progressively, which means that I started with a “wide-angle lens” and through sorting, reviewing and reflecting on the interview data, features of the researched topic started to emerge (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

The data analysis builds on a hermeneutical approach. This means that the meaning of parts of the data is derived from the understanding of the totality, at the same time as the meaning of the totality is understood by reference to the individual parts. This is often described as a hermeneutical circle, which is a

continuous process back and forward between the individual parts and the totality (Kvale, 2009). Kvale further writes that this kind of analysis allows the interpretation of meaning in the interview data to go beyond just structuring the data and describing what the interviewees said. Through a hermeneutical analysis, the researcher can find deeper interpretations, and discover relations and structures which were not obvious at the first stage.

In order to analyse and interpret the interview data, I did not depart from any a priori categories. Instead, as I read through the field notes, I identified themes and key words/phrases, which I wrote down on pieces of paper and puzzled together. As the research progressed, I added more material, and changed things around when new categories or relationships appeared, or when I found contradictions in the interpretation. Furthermore, I read reports and previous research between interviews, using it to contribute to the analysis.

Ethical considerations

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) emphasise the importance of looking at the whole research process from an ethical point of view. They argue that each step in the process requires considerations, including the research question, the purpose, the context in which the research is taking place, the data collection method, the type of data collected, and how the research is used.

In the study, the Swedish Research Council's ethical principles regarding information, consent, confidentiality and utilization were taken into account (Swedish Research Council, 2002).

Kvale (2009) suggests that informed consent means that the participants are informed about the purpose of the study and how it is structured, and that they agree to participate. I started the meetings/interviews with a brief presentation of myself and my research interest. I always aimed to be open with my intentions, my background and how the information would be used. The participants received my contact details, in case they had any questions or wanted to add further

information.

The interviewees were further informed that the data would be handled anonymously, according to the confidentiality principle (Swedish Research Council, 2002). According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), a participant is classed as anonymous only if you cannot identify him or her by the information contained in the report. Considering that this study covers some issues of a sensitive nature, I only provide limited information on each of the participating schools, organisations and individuals. Institutions or PA government departments might be identifiable, but only in those interviews conducted in order to get background information. As I wanted to ensure the complete anonymity of the interviewees, none of the interviews were recorded.

Another ethical factor regards the purpose for which the data will be used (Swedish Research Council, 2002). The information in this study will be used only for research purposes, about which the participants were informed.

Respect for non-maleficence and beneficence, i.e. not doing harm and instead focusing on doing good, was taken into consideration during all phases of the research. As long as the interview data is handed anonymously, I cannot see any consequences for the interviewees from participating in the study. Although the study deals with a debated topic, I doubt that publishing the results of the study will have any negative consequences for the interviewees or the groups that they represent. On the contrary, I hope the research can help to improve the situation for the participants and their colleagues.

Trustworthiness

Whilst there are many definitions of the terms validity and reliability, and their relevance within “qualitative” research, I have chosen to discuss these under the term “trustworthiness”. The trustworthiness of a study can be affected by a number of factors, including the role of the researcher, the factual accuracy of the interviews, and the ability of the researcher to interpret the interviews and catch

the meaning of the interviewees (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). By being transparent about how the data has been collected and analysed, I believe that the reader will be able to make an informed decision on whether to trust the data or not.

This thesis is based on prolonged engagement in the field. I did two field visits to the occupied Palestinian territory, and was able to spend nearly five months in the area. Being a part of the researched world for an extended period of time allowed me to develop a deeper understanding for the context. I believe this has enhanced my ability to capture the meaning of the interviewees. Another strength of the study is that it builds on the narratives of the interviewees. As mentioned above, the data was analysed inductively, without pre-decided categories, and it is mainly presented in the terms of the respondents. Both of these factors support the descriptive and interpretive validity of the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011).

Regarding the generalizability of the findings, a strong point of this case study is that it builds on a relatively large number of interviewees, who represent different professional groups and live in different parts of the occupied Palestinian territory. However, it is important to remember that all situations are different, and this study can only claim to provide examples specific for a certain context. There are major variations within the diverse Palestinian society. This empirical study is concentrated on schools and organisations located in or working in Area C, East Jerusalem and the refugee camps. The situation in a private school in Ramallah is different from the situation in a refugee camp, and I therefore do not suggest that the findings are representative for the whole Palestinian population.

Finally, I want to emphasise that this thesis builds on my personal understanding of the researched topic. Although I have looked at the issue from different perspectives, maintained a professional distance from the research environment, talked to people with conflicting opinions and let their narratives form the result of the study, this thesis is still a product of my own understanding of the researched environment and topic. It is, however, the outcome of quite

extensive reading, discussion and various objectivising procedures that distinguish this thesis from a mere essay expressing my personal opinions.

Part IV – Results and analysis

The purpose of this section is to provide examples of how education in human rights is perceived and implemented in the occupied Palestinian territory, and how the Palestinian educators navigate the challenges resulting from the Israeli occupation. The bulk of the data stems from a case study carried out in the area in 2015, during which I interviewed Palestinian teachers, school leaders, community educators, officials and representatives from organisations. Where needed, this has been supplemented with information from reports and fact sheets.

The case study was guided by the following research question: What are the implications of the Israeli occupation on human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory, how do local educators navigate challenges resulting from these implications, and how can this be understood in the context of relations between international policies and their local implementations?

Policies and initiatives on human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory

What emerged from the study is that there is widespread interest in education and training related to human rights issues in the occupied Palestinian territory. These activities are carried out by several different actors who are involved in education in the area. In addition to the two main education providers, the Palestinian Authority and UNRWA, there are several different NGOs engaged in activities that can be described as human rights education.

Human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory consists of a number of different programs and other types of human rights initiatives, involving both the formal education system and non-formal education in community centres. I will not attempt to provide a comprehensive overview of all the different human rights education initiatives in the occupied Palestinian territory, but only to highlight some of the initiatives that I encountered in the

course of my field study.

Human rights education initiatives by formal education providers

Human rights as a part of civic education

There is no national action plan for human rights education in the Palestinian territories. However, human rights are dealt with as an aspect of civic education, a subject that was introduced in Palestinian primary schools when the PA got control of the education system after the Oslo Accords (Nicolai, 2007; UNESCO, 2006).

The subject is taught in Primary 1-9 and the textbooks include, among other topics, a relatively comprehensive collection of facts on human rights. Over the nine years, many of the rights that can be found in the main UN human rights instruments are discussed. The discussed topics include but are not limited to the right to freedom of religion, the right to express one's opinion, the right to vote, the right to a fair trial, and also central concepts such as participation, non-discrimination, tolerance, solidarity, diversity and pluralism (PCDC, Civic Education textbooks, Primary 1-9).

In an interview with officials at the Palestinian Curriculum Development Center [PCDC], I was told that they perceive the aim of civic education as to foster good citizens, who appreciate human beings around the world, act in accordance with the international community, and show appreciation for human rights. The children should learn not to use violence, and to appreciate diversity and different religions.

UNRWA: Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance Education

As was mentioned above, UNRWA is the UN body responsible for education in the Palestinian refugee camps. UNRWA uses the curriculum of the host countries, and therefore teaches civic education in its schools located in the Palestinian territories. Additionally, UNRWA has introduced its own human rights programme, 'Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance Education', with

the purpose of further integrating human rights education in their schools. The vision of the programme is:

To provide human rights education that empowers Palestine refugee students to enjoy and exercise their rights, uphold human rights values, be proud of their Palestinian identity, and contribute positively to their society and the global community (UNRWA, 2013a, p. 2).

The basic idea is to teach human rights through activities and practical exercises (UNRWA, 2013a). A handbook with examples of various exercises that can be carried out with the children is distributed to all teachers in the UNRWA schools. According to a representative of UNRWA, these activities are intended to link theory and practice, and teachers should implement at least one activity with each class at least once a month.

There are a number of examples of activities in the handbook. For the youngest students, these include making classroom rules, a blind trust exercise, and role-play on bullying. For slightly older children, suggested activities include human rights bingo, surveys on the accessibility of the school, and discussion activities on non-discrimination, equality and gender. For the students in the oldest age group, Primary 6-9, activities includes making drawings about children's rights, a model UN simulation, and making a front page for a newspaper (UNRWA, 2013b).

The factsheet on the programme states that one of the strategic objectives of the programme is to “build on the human rights principles embedded within the cultural context of Palestine refugees” (UNRWA, 2013a, p. 2). However, although the occupation and its human rights violations are central parts of the lives of Palestinian refugee children, I was told both by principals and by teachers in UNRWA-run schools that they have been asked to avoid talking with the children about the occupation. I met mixed opinions on this, but a principal in a refugee camp argued for the official UNRWA policy and said it allows the school to be a free zone from the situation:

We all live in it, and all of us know about it. We can talk about other things, for once. I'm with UNRWA. Let them play and talk about other things. They are only

children. If we make them think about and talk about the occupation in the family, society *and* in the school, they are not going to live a healthy life (Principal, school 8, refugee camp).

The street-level bureaucrats in the formal education sector

Discussing the occupation with the children

The majority of interviewees seem positive toward the PA and UNRWA initiatives on human rights education, but indicate that these initiatives are not comprehensive enough. The rights that are violated as a result of the occupation are to a large extent avoided both in the civic education textbooks and in the UNRWA Human Rights, Conflict Resolution, and Tolerance Education programme. However, several interviewees expressed the view that it is important that politics and the occupation can be discussed and dealt with, because it is so closely connected to the everyday life of the Palestinian children. Some teachers said that they did discuss the occupation with the children when talking about human rights, in spite of instructions not to. The reason behind this is the importance of being honest with the students. They said that loyalty toward the children is, for them, more important than loyalty toward UNRWA policy:

We can talk about human rights in a more general way but they [UNRWA] don't want us to talk about the soldiers. But I need to feel that I am a good teacher. I need to make a good relationship with the students, and tell them real information. Trust is important. We don't want to lie to the students (Teacher, school 8, refugee camp).

There are several reasons why teachers and experts find it important to discuss human rights violations in school. Some of the interviewees emphasised that human rights violations are a central part of the lives of the children, and should therefore not be ignored.

The children live in an adult context. It is important to get children to talk about what they witness on a daily basis (Director, local organisation 3).

An interviewee from a human rights organisation expressed her worry that the

violations have become normalised and said that it is therefore important to teach children about their rights and how to defend them.

Many incidents don't get reported anymore. It is normalised that their school bags are searched on the way to school. They nearly forget that they have the right to get to school on time (Member of staff, international organisation 2).

“They need to know their rights”, one interviewee stated, adding that this is necessary for fighting the occupation. Another teacher expressed the same opinion:

Students have to believe they have rights... people that are under occupation must take their freedom. Any student in Palestine must believe in his rights and defend them (Teacher, school 4, Area C).

Several of the interviewed teachers considered freedom and security to be the most important topics to discuss with the children. The right to freedom of movement, stemming from the many roadblocks in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the right to freedom of religion, particularly because most Palestinians not are allowed to pray at Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, are other rights considered to be important. One teacher explained his priorities:

The right to security, the right of free movement... living in the homeland freely, and to go from one place to another freely, without checkpoints. What they lack is security and [freedom of] movement, and free worshipping. We concentrate more on these rights (Teacher, school 2, East Jerusalem).

Teaching tolerance – but not with the Israeli soldiers

The rights violated by the occupation power are not the only rights that Palestinian teachers and educators find important to teach to their students. “Tolerance”, “forgiveness” and “acceptance” were other expressions used by some of the interviewees when asked to describe their perception of what human rights education should entail. However, some of the interviewees find these concepts problematic when talking about the occupation. When asked to define who the children should tolerate, the interviewees were sceptical about whether

tolerance with and acceptance of the Israelis could be promoted.

We can teach them to accept others in the Palestinian society ... but acceptance towards Israelis is impossible (Teacher, school 7, refugee camp).

This leads to the question – who has rights? Should human rights also apply to Israeli settlers?

We recognise that everyone has the right to live in peace and security, but on his or her own land! We are not calling for the right of the settler to come and take my land (Director, local organisation 2).

This interviewee went on to explain that it is important to differ between Jewish people, Israelis, soldiers and settlers.

It is important to differentiate between the occupation and the Jewish people. All these violations are not done by the Jewish people, but by the occupation. This is a part of our [human rights education] programmes (Director, local organisation 2).

Most of interviewees seem to agree with this. One teacher said:

We have nothing against the Jewish religion as such. But when it changed into occupation and a Zionist movement, things changed (Teacher, school 2, East Jerusalem).

The involvement of NGOs in human rights education

There are also educational initiatives based on human rights, run by non-governmental organisations. The density of NGOs in the West Bank is high and consists of organisations of various sizes, ranging from some large international organisations to local initiatives which consist of only a single employee, or that are run by volunteers alongside their normal work. Some of these are involved in education and implement various projects in the schools or organises extra-curricular activities, training courses or workshops, for example in the refugee camps.

Community education in the refugee camps

The refugee camps house various community centres, some of which are involved

in activities related to human rights education. I visited two community centres in two different refugee camps, both of which offer training and education programmes on human rights.

A volunteer in the first centre said that they were able to “talk much more freely” than in the UNRWA school in the same camp, and this allowed them to discuss human rights from a wider perspective. Volunteers and employees from the same centre also carry out activities in the schools. The volunteer described a human rights project that they had carried out in schools in the camp:

We told the children how to deal with their human rights and how to protect themselves. We talked about education, play, and the right to have safety in the country... to have freedom for Jerusalem... and the right of return, that it is important that they know where they originally come from (Educator, community centre 1, refugee camp).

In both centres, the concept of the right of return is treated as a natural and integral part of human rights education. In the second centre that I visited, an educator said:

The right of return is the most important right. Human rights and refugee rights are closely connected (Educator, community centre 2, refugee camp).

The centre does not currently offer any education in human rights, but the employee described a human rights project carried out a couple of years ago. She pointed out that it is important to make the children aware about their rights:

We spoke about human rights and the situation of refugees in Palestine, and we made comparisons between life in the homeland and life in the refugee camp. We told them about what the situation must be, what it should be. They must know their rights, or they will not ask for them (Educator, community centre 2, refugee camp).

NGO project on international law

Another NGO initiative related to human rights education is a project on international law, which is carried out in cooperation with some of the secondary schools that I visited. For the project, the students make presentations with photos

and text, and compete against students in other schools.

I interviewed a teacher and a principal in a school in East Jerusalem which had taken part in the project. They said that the students are badly affected by the occupation, not least on the way to school, where they are confronted with Israeli soldiers and are sometimes arrested.

The teacher explained that the aim of the project is to make the students aware that, despite the number of human rights violations that they are subjected to, there are international laws that they could use to protect their cause as Palestinians. The project is laid out as a competition between schools.

Students pick one violation and compare it with the conventions and do research, and then perform in front of a committee. We are always placed first or second, because there are so many violations here! (Teacher, school 1, East Jerusalem)

I was told that the human rights violations and the particular rights that the students in this school had worked on recently included Israeli censorship of the Palestinian curriculum in East Jerusalem, the separation barrier, house arrests, military checkpoints, and confiscation of houses. Another school, located close to a settlement in Area C of the West Bank, had taken part in the same project. The principal explained that they have focused on Israeli attacks on schools, and that it had not been difficult for the students to find inspiration for their project.

This is the worst settlement in Palestine. The settlers are very dangerous. They attack the farmers and students. For the last three years there have been continuous attacks. The children feel fear (Principal, school 3, Area C).

The rights of children in detention

In addition to this, I came across some other projects related to human rights education. For example, one project involves the rights of children in Israeli detention. I was told both by a principal and by a NGO representative that both local and international NGOs had been involved in information projects in different schools, in which children were informed about their rights in case they would be detained. The Israeli security forces have been highly criticised, for

example by Human Rights Watch (2015), for using unnecessary force when detaining Palestinian children. Some children are as young as 11, and there are reports of children being beaten, choked and threatened, as well as being interrogated without the presence of lawyers or parents.

The rights of children that are detained are especially highlighted by teachers and principals in schools located in Area C and in East Jerusalem. The children in those areas must sometimes face the Israeli security forces on their way to and from school. During a school visit in East Jerusalem, the principal told me that ten students had been detained in the two weeks before the interview. By the time of the interview, some had already been released, while others were still in Israeli custody.

Not all NGO initiatives on human rights education deal with rights that are related to the occupation. Other examples include projects related to children's participation and other rights of children.

Challenges to human rights education practices resulting from the Israeli occupation

Nearly all of the interviewees highlighted the big differences between the visions of the human rights instruments, and the situation on the ground. On the one hand, as a result of the conflict and the occupation children already know a lot about human rights. Human rights, or at least the absence of them, are widely talked about in society, and teachers are far from being the only or the first people to talk to the children about these matters

At the same time, the gap between ideals and reality is described by the interviewees as the main challenge for them in human rights education.

Convincing children about their rights

Many of the interviewees explained that it can be a challenge to convince the

children that they should have rights like everyone else in the world. “It is hard to convince people about their rights when their rights have been taken from them”, said the director of a local organisation.

A teacher from a girls’ primary school in a refugee camp explained her strategies for teaching the girls about human rights in accordance with the civic education textbooks and the UNRWA exercises, but noted that the context makes education in human rights difficult.

We use the textbooks, and I encourage them to do their own research. We let them talk about it and draw about it. We show them videos. And we discuss these things. But it is difficult to teach them from the books. They need to live it, too (Teacher, school 8, refugee camp).

The officials at the PCDC also recognises that the local context makes human rights education a challenge. “God help the teachers”, one of the officials said, stating that they are aware of the difficulties teachers face when trying to implement the human rights curriculum in the schools. The Jalazone refugee camp, which is located next to an Israeli settlement, is specifically mentioned as an example.

In reality there is a contradiction. Just look at Jalazone - the school is next to the settlement. How can we teach them about human rights? (Official, PCDC)

Some interviewees report that the children have many questions that the teachers do not know how to respond to. A volunteer at a community centre said:

I told them that there are some rights they can't have. The children asked 'why not?' but I couldn't answer (Educator, community centre 1, refugee camp).

She continued: “How do I explain the word 'right'?”, suggesting that even the basic concept is difficult to grasp when the gap between the international laws and the reality is so big.

The teachers use a number of strategies to explain the concept of human rights for the children, such as using examples available from the local context. One interviewee explained that teachers can use the refugee camps as examples when talking about the right to freedom of movement:

You can tell the children that you are allowed to move from Kalandia camp to Jalazone camp (Member of staff, international organisation 1).

Another strategy is to explain that the children should have rights like everyone else, but that it is the fault of the occupation that these are being violated.

We try to implement some activities, and tell the children: these are your rights but Israel as the occupier prevents (Teacher, school 7, refugee camp).

Reactions from the children

A consequence of talking about human rights violations is that children become worried and sad. According to some of the interviewees, this is especially the case among younger children. “When learning about this, they find that they don't have many of these rights” a teacher from a refugee camp school said. According to the teacher, some of the children react with sadness when they learn about human rights: “They feel sad when they learn about the rights they should have”.

Learning about the gap between the visions of the human rights instruments and the reality on the ground, they take the view that the human rights system is inefficient.

They learn that there is some discrimination. But I face a challenge when explaining about the UN and that there should be no discrimination. 'But still the Israelis practise all this discrimination', they say. And they ask 'Why Palestinians? Why is the UN not helping? Why is Israel above the law?' (Teacher, school 2, East Jerusalem).

Several interviewees recognised that human rights education contributes to frustration with the human rights system, and not least with the international community, which is perceived as doing nothing to prevent the human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory due to the occupation.

Of course they do blame the UN. They are outraged about the UN. And the European countries... they feel frustrated that these countries are witnessing what is going on without doing anything, even though they are countries with democracy and human rights (Teacher, school 2, East Jerusalem).

Talking about the project where secondary school students discuss the Israeli violations in comparison to international law, a teacher said:

The reactions differ between students. Some feel convinced that there is international law which they can use as a means. Others think it is a waste of time, nonsense, because Israel is above the law. No one in the international world holds it accountable (...). Most of them feel like it is no idea, it is just empty words. Some even refuse to take part... it is very difficult to get the children in this school to take part (Teacher, school 1, East Jerusalem).

It is not only the students that become frustrated with the human rights system. The teachers are also subjected to human rights violations, which makes it “very difficult” for them to convince the children about the efficiency of human rights law.

I myself am not convinced about international law... because every day we are subject to violations! (Teacher, school 1, East Jerusalem)

The consequences of empowerment

An official at the PCDC points to the dilemma of teaching children to stand up for their rights.

What if you convince a small child in Jalazone camp that he has the right to freedom of movement, and he then thinks he should be allowed to walk on this road? And maybe he will exercise his right, and get into trouble with the soldiers, and get killed. It is also about safety (Official, PCDC).

Another dilemma about making young people angry and frustrated with the injustices in their society, and about the inefficiency of the human rights system, is that it can result in them using violence as a means for defending their rights. The interviewees agreed that there are now different and more efficient ways of fighting for one's rights.

In the culture, the hero is the one who stabs or kills. We want to build dialogue. That is the important skill... We must show the children that violence is not the way (Director, local organisation 2).

However, educators are struggling to find alternative ways of empowering

children to fight for their rights. One of the community educators in the refugee camp said that the conflict has turned into a “war on information”. At the same time, she recognised that lobbying and documenting human rights violations have historically not seemed to make much of a difference or changed the situation.

Several teachers were worried to observe that the Israeli actions promote violence among the children.

I try to be moderate, never to encourage any violence toward the Israelis. But it is difficult to teach the students to respect the Israelis as neighbours when students are violated (Teacher, school 2, East Jerusalem).

I visited several schools in Area C of the West Bank, two of which were especially exposed to attacks from settlers and soldiers. In a school located close to several settlements, the principal stated:

The school here is like a military zone. It is not a suitable place for children. They [the settlers] attack the school, throw stones and even molotovs. And soldiers are around the area, monitoring what is happening, showing their muscles (Principal, school 4, Area C).

Although he did not want to promote violence, he said that “the children have to protect themselves” and pointed out that armed resistance against foreign rule is also a human right. There is even a right to use force, and the justification for legitimate armed resistance has been specifically applied to the Palestinian struggle. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/3246 (XXIX) of 1974, states:

3. Reaffirms the legitimacy of the peoples’ struggle for liberation from colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation by all available means, including armed struggle; (...)

7. Strongly condemns all Governments which do not recognize the right to self-determination and independence of peoples under colonial and foreign domination and alien subjugation, notably the peoples of Africa and the Palestinian people (UN General Assembly, 1974).

In order to avoid increasing the frustration and the anger of the children, some teachers are trying to find ways around the problem. A widely-used strategy is to explain that the children will have their rights when the occupation ends. The

occupation is spoken about as something that will come to an end sooner or later.

I try to convince them that this is normal under occupation. That this will end when the occupation ends. According to history, all occupations will one day come to an end (Teacher, school 2, East Jerusalem).

Some teachers see education on human rights as preparing the children for living with their rights in the future, when they get older and the occupation has gone away.

We are accustomed to the situation. We know our rights and how we can apply them, and later we will! (Teacher, school 3, Area C).

Analysis

What emerged from the study is that there is widespread interest in education and training related to human rights concerns in the territory. However, human rights education in the occupied Palestinian territory is a fragmented field, illustrating the ambiguous and multi-faceted nature of the concept of human rights. Although there are some policies in place, no one has taken a leading role and there is no overarching vision for human rights education in the area.

Although many educational activities have clear links to human rights, the concept “human rights education” is rarely used by the interviewees. Overall, the international instruments seem to have limited influence on how human rights education is understood and practised in the occupied Palestinian territory. Instead, human rights education builds on local initiatives. The examples from the occupied Palestinian territory support the finding of Gerber (2006) that human rights education is affected to a large extent by the teacher’s own personal background and experiences.

A number of different conceptualisations and perceptions of human rights education have evolved on the ground and in the classroom. I found that interpretations of human rights education can include everything from deciding on classroom rules and blind-fold exercises to teaching the right of return and the

rights of the detained. It seems that teachers and educators often see education in human rights with different eyes and with a different perspective than international and national policymakers. The civic education and UNRWA initiatives can be compared to what Bajaj (2011) describes as HRE for Global Citizenship and HRE for Coexistence. There are also parallels between these initiatives and concepts such as democracy and social cohesion.

However, there are numerous gaps between the visions of the drafters of the international human rights instruments, on the one hand, and the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, on the other. Both teachers and NGOs work to adapt human rights education to the local context. Although sometimes told not to talk about the occupation with the children, many teachers choose to tell their students about their rights to security, freedom of movement, the rights of children in their encounters with Israeli security forces, and other rights related to violations by the occupation power. Some interpret human rights as being necessarily related to the right of return. In general, I found that activities initiated by individual teachers or by NGOs tend to have a more activist tone than the PA and UNRWA policies. This corresponds to the idea of human rights education as a tool for empowerment and transformative action (Bajaj, 2011; Toivanen, 2009).

The local context in which the human rights education takes place gives rise to several challenges. According to the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, children should learn about human rights through a rights-respecting environment. However, this can be difficult to achieve in the occupied Palestinian territory, as the children learn not only from the school environment, but also from the situations in which they are involved (Biesta, 2003; Gordon, 2012). This means that factors in the local community and in the environment can render human rights education ineffective or, in the worst case, even counter-productive.

According to the World Programme for Human Rights Education, education in human rights should relate to the learners' real-life experience, but this can be

perceived as a frustrating exercise. Both the literature review (Çayır & Bağlı, 2011; Dolan, Gundara & King, 2011) and the case study have shown that basing human rights education on the local context will draw attention to the gap between the ideals of the international human rights instruments and the reality on the ground. Although human rights are legally binding, human rights are being violated systematically around the world, and the system lacks mechanisms to prevent the abuse of rights (Donnelly, 2011). As the Palestinian examples show, this inefficiency results in both children and their teachers losing hope in the human rights system. As Allen (2013) observed in Palestinian society, this threatens to contribute to cynicism about human rights.

The UN instruments on human rights education recognise that skills and attitudes are essential components in order to promote and defend human rights (UN General Assembly 2006, 2011). Although there are some diverging views on the purpose of human rights education, some claim that human rights education can have an important empowering role, particularly for people from marginalised or repressed groups (Bajaj, 2011; Gerber, 2008). However, these empowering activities can also have unintended and undesirable consequences. Some scholars draw direct parallels between human rights education and non-violent conflict resolution (Reimers & Chung, 2010). The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna recognised the role of education for “the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relations among communities and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace” (UN General Assembly, 1993). The Palestinian examples show that human rights education can, on the other hand, shed light on human rights violations and injustices in the society, which supports Holland’s (2011) concerns that human rights education can in fact be a source of disputes. It risks making children angry with the occupation power, and the case study indicates that it even can give rise to violence when alternative ways are seen as inefficient.

Armed struggle against foreign rule may be a right (UN General Assembly, 1974), but the reality is that both children and also adults - from both sides of the

conflict - are injured and killed in exercising this right. It is important that children are offered other options for resisting the occupation and for defending their human rights. However, the Palestinian examples show that educators are struggling to find alternative ways of empowering children to fight for their rights. They are unsure of how to deal with children who become frustrated and angry with the human rights system and with the actions of the occupying power. Some educators try to navigate this challenge by focusing on better times in the future. They perceive that their role as human right educators is to prepare children for living with their rights in the future, when the occupation has gone away. In the meantime, however, these teachers do not provide the children with any tools for fighting the occupation, for standing up for their rights, or for living in the real situation at the present time.

Part V: Discussion and conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to increase knowledge about the implementation of human rights education, by contributing with perspectives on how a context marked by conflict and injustice can affect the norms and conditions for education in human rights. To do this, I have looked at human rights education as something particular rather than universal, and local rather than global, in order to understand what happens when the abstract international norms meet the social and political reality on the ground.

Education is seen an important tool for strengthening respect for human rights. Human rights education has the potential to be the bridge between human rights law and the community in which the international norms are to be implemented (UN General Assembly, 2006). However, as both the literature review and the case study in the occupied Palestinian territory have shown, there is a long way from the legal norms on human rights and from visions of human rights education to the reality on the ground, especially in a context marked by conflict and injustice. Educators have policy documents to relate to, but at the same time, the teaching takes place in a social context influenced by a wide range of factors.

International norms and local conceptualisations

Through conducting interviews with Palestinian educators, school leaders and experts, I have come to realise that when the ambiguous and multi-faceted human rights norms meet a conflict-troubled context, it gives rise to many questions and dilemmas. Is armed struggle a human right? Do human rights apply to an occupier? Why is the international community quiet and passive, when people's rights are being violated? Should we discuss human rights violations with children? The international norms and guidelines on human rights education offer few concrete answers to these questions. As a result, social and professional

norms, which respond to these challenges, are formed.

Conceptualisation and the implementation of human rights education in the classroom, and other instances in the local community, can thus differ from the way in which the concept is understood and described in both international and national policy documents. Lipsky (2010) argues that policy is created in the everyday operations and in the meetings between street-level bureaucrats and the citizens. In our case, the street-level bureaucrats are the educators, and the citizens are the children. The study has shown that the situation at street level, in a context marked by conflict and injustice, makes it difficult to follow the international ideals. The UN initiatives are well-intended, but in contexts like this, they are not enough. Focusing on human rights education for indigenous people in Australia, Gerber (2008) argues that the UN's attempts to define human rights education have been largely unsuccessful:

They have endeavoured to develop a broad characterisation of HRE that is appropriate for everyone, but in the result have adopted a narrative that is unsuitable to the majority of the world's Indigenous people (Gerber, 2008, p. 4)

When they feel that the international and national initiatives on human rights education are not adequate, due to the challenges that the context brings, individual teachers and local organisations take action to adapt the education in human rights to the perceived needs of the society, or according to their own agenda. The case study in the occupied Palestinian territory shows that individual teachers and NGOs thus play important roles in shaping the local norms on education in human rights, supporting similar findings from other parts of the world (Bajaj, 2011; Coysh, 2014; Gerber 2006). Therefore, as Lipsky (2010) suggests, policy-making should be viewed and understood from a bottom-up perspective. Using a bottom-up approach to interpret human rights education in contexts marked by conflict and injustice, can help us understand how education in human rights is perceived and implemented by street-level bureaucrats, how factors in the local context will affect the education practices, and what social norms guide the processes of human rights education in this situation.

That schools can be arenas for formation of social and professional norms is confirmed by Wickenberg (2013) in his studies on norms setters in education. Similarly, this study has shown that human rights practices are shaped by social and professional norms, which are formed in their local context. One social/professional norm that has appeared in the local context, is that, although told not to, many teachers and educators find it important to talk to the children about the human rights that are violated as a result of the conflict, as 1) the children have a right to know about the situation, and 2) the human rights violations threaten to become normalised. If they are not aware about their rights, children cannot stand up for and defend their rights. Hence, locally important rights, which in the Palestinian case includes for example the right of return, the rights of children in detention and even the right to armed resistance in self-defence, become integrated into human rights in education in the occupied Palestinian territory. These findings can be seen in the light of Ehrlich's conclusions from living and working in the multicultural Austrian Empire, where he saw that legal norms often played a minor role, in comparison with social norms, in how the society operated (Ehrlich, 1913/2001).

HRE can be inefficient and counter-productive

As Mathiesen (2005) argues, there are often significant limitations in the intended effects of laws, and laws can even have unintended consequences when interpreted and implemented in a local context. Correspondingly, this study has shown that a context marked by conflict and injustice threatens to make human rights education practices ineffective.

According to the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, children should learn “through” human rights. However, this will be difficult to achieve in a context marked by conflict and injustice, and has implications for the children's ability to grasp the human rights agenda. The circumstances make it difficult for educators to convince children about some of their rights, and some educators find it difficult to answer the many questions their

students ask.

It is widely considered important to take the local context into account when designing and implementing education and training in human rights. According to the World Programme for Human Rights Education, human rights education must relate to learners' real-life experience and enable them to "build on human rights principles found in their own cultural context" (UN General Assembly, 2006). This is supported by previous research, which highlights the importance of adapting the human rights curriculum to the specific society in which it is applied (Coysh, 2014; Gordon, 2012; Struthers, 2015). However, using contextually and culturally relevant examples in human rights education activities draws attention to the gap between visions and reality. When learning to frame and explain their experiences using human rights language, children in conflict-troubled societies react in different ways. Educators report that some children become sad and worried about the human rights violations, and that others risk becoming frustrated with the perceived inefficiency of the system and with their own incapacity to change their situation.

A context marked by conflict and injustice also threatens to make the human rights education practices counter-productive. The literature review and the Palestinian examples have shown that both scholars and educators recognise the transformative potential of human rights education. They think that it can empower learners to stand up for their rights and fight injustices in their local communities. Gerber (2004) suggests that one aim of human rights education for repressed groups in a society should be to help them to participate actively in advocacy and in lobbying for human rights. If this is to work, children must see that these tools can make a difference. However, teaching human rights to children who are subjected to human rights violations sheds light on the limitations of the human rights system and shows that it in fact offers very little support for people who are fighting for their rights. As the examples from the occupied Palestinian territory show, there is a concern that children will develop frustration not only with the violators but also with the international community,

when the human rights instruments are perceived as only empty words and the human rights system fails to provide learners with tools to help changing the current situation. Instead of empowering students, there is a danger that human rights education practices will lead instead to the children losing hope and trust in human rights. Frustration with the failure of the human rights system to produce results for an oppressed community can lead to unintended and undesirable effects. If they see no viable alternatives, children may decide that violence is a better option.

The findings show that educators frequently encounter challenges for which they have been given no guidelines, and they are often unsure how to handle them. The international human rights discourse often provides little or no support on how to deal with the reactions of students living in conflict-troubled societies. The lack of guidelines does not just provide space for street-level bureaucrats' to develop their own social and professional interpretations and norms on how to navigate the challenges brought by the local context; it often forces them to make their own norms.

Concluding remarks

This thesis has shed light on what can happen when the visions in the international human rights instruments are placed within a conflict-troubled context. It started from the idea that there is a long way from international legal norms on human rights education to the reality on the ground, especially in a context marked by conflict and injustice. Educators have policy documents to relate to, but at the same time, the teaching takes place in a social context influenced by a number of different factors. As this study has shown, the purposes and the outcomes of human rights education can be much affected by the context in which it is interpreted and implemented. This means that the international norms are not necessarily what guide the human rights education practices.

When an attempt is made to build a bridge between human rights and the

local society, the gap between visions and the reality becomes obvious. However, the international discourse on human rights education fails to capture the complexity and diversity of the field and the challenges that arise when human rights are translated into a local reality. When the international norms fail to provide support on how to teach human rights in a conflict-troubled context, it is the street-level bureaucrats and their social and professional norms that guide the implementation of human rights education.

Legal norms can have unintended consequences when interpreted and implemented in a social context. The conditions for human rights education in a conflict-troubled society are challenging, both for educators and for the children being educated. When the street-level bureaucrats fail to explain the gap between the visions and the reality, there is a risk that human rights education can be ineffective and even counter-productive.

Therefore, I argue that there is a need to re-conceptualise human rights education, and to develop both the discourse and the international instruments on human rights education in such a way that they respond not only to the situation of teachers and students in contexts where their human rights are more or less well protected, but also to the different needs of teachers and students in conflict-troubled contexts. The aim should be to help all teachers working in all contexts to implement effective and productive education in human rights in their local societies.

Suggestions for further research

This study focuses on the experiences of the street-level educators, largely ignoring the role of the students. It is important to remember that children are not passive absorbers of knowledge. There are always differences between what teachers intend learners to learn, and what effect the teaching has on the learner, and this can be beyond the control of both international policy makers and street-level implementers. However, there is limited research on how children in contexts marked by conflict and injustice perceive education on human rights, and

for further research I therefore suggest a study on this topic.

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