The Struggle to Reclaim Human Rights Education in Palestinian Authority Schools in the Occupied West Bank

Mai Abu Moghli

Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD degree at the UCL Institute of Education

June 2016
Abstract

This thesis provides a critical view of Human Rights Education (HRE) within a context of colonial occupation, authoritarian national ruling structure and oppressive social practices. It explores the reasons behind the introduction of HRE in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the Occupied West Bank. It investigates how stakeholders make meaning of and implement HRE. Finally, it examines the relationship between HRE and the struggle against the Occupation and for political and social change.

The data was generated during six months divided over two field research trips. The research employed ethnographic methods such as classroom and whole school observations and semi-structured interviews. The analysis is framed within a critical constructivist paradigm allowing for reaching beyond mere descriptive accounts of HRE and foregrounding the findings within the indigenous knowledge.

This thesis addresses gaps in the literature by problematising the theoretical basis of HRE and highlighting the importance of indigenous knowledge and strategies used to bring the decontextualised global to the nuanced and politicised local. Additionally, the data analysis reveals that HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank has no clear aim or orientation. It is flattened, decontextualised and depoliticised to serve the ruling party, perpetuate socio-cultural oppressive practices and structures and implement donors’ agendas. HRE in PA schools does not allow for students’ engagement in human rights praxis, limiting their ability to dismantle structures of domination and oppression. It increases cynicism and disillusionment towards human rights. In spite of that, on the school level some teachers and students employ a number of strategies to re-claim HRE. These strategies are: vernacularisation, Islamisation, hidden curriculum and the continuous struggle.

Having reached these findings from the literature review and data analysis, I reconceptualise HRE and provide an alternative understanding of HRE’s potential contribution to the emancipation of the individual and collective within a polarised, multi-layered, and fast changing context.
Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

Word count (exclusive of appendices and bibliography): 82,011

Signed:

Date: 25 June 2016
Acknowledgements

I would like to express all my love and appreciation to my amazing, loving and tirelessly supporting partner, Nathan. Completing this thesis would not have been possible without him. I truly appreciate his unconditional support and love that did not fade once in spite of all the stress, late working hours and the times I had to spend away from him to be able to complete my work. His presence in my life allowed me to pursue my dream. Nathan, I cannot thank you enough.

Fathi and Ahed, my parents, who in spite of the distance, they have been supportive, encouraging and showed unlimited confidence in me. Baba o Mama, Shukran!

I am deeply grateful for the support and humor of my sister and brother, Mira and Abed. Their jokes about my love for books and education kept me going. Aboud o Mira, Ba7ibkom.

I would like to express my gratitude to my family in law, especially to Eve and Natalie for their support, love and comfort.

I am extremely grateful to all the students, teachers, head teachers, school counsellors, MOE officials, academics, NGO/INGO professionals and activists who contributed with their time, views, reflections and profound analysis to my work. While they all worked in an extremely difficult and challenging environment and under so much political uncertainty, they were all so kind and helpful. My absolute admiration goes to all the students and teachers who their resilience and love for life taught me a great deal.

I am grateful to all my amazing friends for their support and encouragement especially when I doubted myself. Thank you Reem, Yazid, Nour and Nof.

I would like to express my absolute and deepest gratitude to Professor Hugh Starkey. I am so lucky to have him as a supervisor. His support has been extraordinary. I appreciate his detailed and always encouraging and extremely helpful comments, as well as his interest in my wider work and activism. I always felt he believed in my work and me. I cannot thank him enough for all the opportunities he provided me with to be involved in academic and research work in the UK and abroad. I genuinely admire his impressive supervision style. I am privileged and honored to have him as my supervisor, mentor and boss.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ...................................................................................................................... 4

ACRONYMS ........................................................................................................................................... 9

FIGURES ............................................................................................................................................... 11

CHAPTER (1) ....................................................................................................................................... 12

SETTING THE SCENE .......................................................................................................................... 12

1.1. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................................... 12

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS ................................................................................................................ 16

1.3. EDUCATION IN PALESTINE ......................................................................................................... 18

1.3.1. THE PALESTINIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: STRUCTURES AND FRACTURES........................... 18

1.3.1.1. The Legal Structure and Education ......................................................................................... 19

1.3.1.2. The Social Structure and Education ....................................................................................... 21

1.3.1.3. A Palestinian Education System for the First Time ................................................................. 23

1.3.1.4. Education in the Face of Political Adversity .......................................................................... 26

1.3.2. ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE PALESTINIAN CONTEXT: STRUGGLE, IDENTITY AND NATIONALISM ......................................................................................................................... 30

1.3.3. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN PALESTINE ......................................................................... 36

1.4. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................. 39

CHAPTER (2) ....................................................................................................................................... 40

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: A CONTEXTUALISED VIEW OF A GLOBAL CONCEPT ................................................................. 40

2.1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................ 40

2.2. HRE DEFINITIONS ....................................................................................................................... 41

2.2.1. DEFINITIONS BY INTER-GOVERNMENTAL BODIES ................................................................ 42

2.2.1.1. HRE at the UN Level ............................................................................................................ 42

2.2.1.2. Council of Europe ............................................................................................................... 59

2.2.1.3. League of Arab States ........................................................................................................ 60

2.2.2. DEFINITIONS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ............................................. 62

2.2.3. DEFINITIONS WITHIN ACADEMIA ....................................................................................... 64

2.3. HRE RE-CONCEPTUALISED: THE CASE OF OCCUPIED PALESTINE ................................................. 67

2.3.1. HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE PALESTINIAN CONTEXT: APPROPRIATION AND PRAXIS ........... 68

2.3.2. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION RE-CONCEPTUALISED: MY NEW DEFINITION .................. 73

2.4. CONCLUSION .................................................................................................................................. 76

CHAPTER (3) ....................................................................................................................................... 78

METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................................................. 78

3.1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................................ 78

3.2. PERSONAL MOTIVATION AND ONTOLOGY: THE ‘I’ IN PALEST’INE .............................................. 79

3.3. CRITICAL THEORY AND MY EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE ........................................................... 81

3.4. INTERPRETIVE/CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM AND CRITICAL THEORY .................................... 82

3.5. EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCES: CRITICAL CONSTRUCTIVISM ..................................................... 84

3.6. CRITICAL THEORY IN EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ........................................ 85

3.6.1. CURRICULUM .......................................................................................................................... 85

3.6.2. PEDAGOGY .............................................................................................................................. 86
5.5. RELIGION AND CULTURE ........................................................................................................ 165
5.5.1. VERNACULARIZATION: ISLAM AND PAN-ARABISM .................................................. 166
5.6. CONCLUSION ...................................................................................................................... 169

CHAPTER (6) ................................................................................................................................. 171

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION: PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES ...................................... 171

6.1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 171
6.2. THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM AND TEACHERS’ VALUES ............................................... 172
6.2.1 VALUES TRANSMITTED AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN OPPOSITION WITH HRE .......... 175
6.2.2 VALUES TRANSMITTED AND THE HIDDEN CURRICULUM IN HARMONY WITH HRE .......... 178
6.3. CONTRADICTIONS AND PARADOXICAL EFFECTS ......................................................... 181
6.3.1. CONTRADICTIONS ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL .................................................. 182
6.3.2 CONTRADICTIONS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC LEVEL ........................................ 185
6.3.3. CONTRADICTIONS ON THE SCHOOL LEVEL ..................................................... 189
6.3.3.1. Various Types of Violence ............................................................................ 189
6.3.3.2. Segregation .................................................................................................. 194
6.3.3.3. Lack of Participation .................................................................................... 197
6.4. DO THEY DARE TO RESIST? ............................................................................................ 199
6.5. CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................... 200

CHAPTER (7) ................................................................................................................................. 202

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND STRUGGLE IN THE OCCUPIED WEST BANK .... 202

7.1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 202
7.2. EDUCATION AND STRUGGLE ....................................................................................... 205
7.2.1. MULTI-LAYERED STRUGGLE FOR AND OVER EDUCATION .................................... 206
7.2.2. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND STRUGGLE ...................................................... 208
7.3. HRE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE ........................................................ 214
7.4. HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE OCCUPATION .......... 219
7.5. CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................... 224

CHAPTER (8) ................................................................................................................................. 226

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS HRE FOR STRUGGLE AND CHANGE ............................................. 226

8.1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 226
8.2. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS RESEARCH AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE .... 228
8.2.1. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE ........................................... 229
8.2.2. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS ................................................................................. 231
8.3. SYNTHESIS OF THESIS FINDINGS: PROBLEMATISING AND RE-CLAIMING ........ 232
8.3.1. PROBLEMATISING HRE: FROM THE GLOBAL TO THE OCCUPIED .................... 233
8.3.2. RECLAIMING HRE: FROM THE OCCUPIED TO THE GLOBAL ....................... 238
8.4. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .............................................. 242
8.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH ................................................................. 245
8.6. CONCLUSION ..................................................................................................................... 246

APPENDICIES .............................................................................................................................. 249

APPENDIX (1): INTERVIEWS AND OBSERVATIONS SCHEDULE ........................................ 249
APPENDIX (2): RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET ................................................................. 258
APPENDIX (3) QUESTIONNAIRES .......................................................................................... 259
APPENDIX (4): TRANSCRIPTION AGREEMENT ................................................................. 268
APPENDIX (5): PHOTOS OF ACTIVITIES ............................................................................. 269
APPENDIX (6): CLASSROOM OBSERVATION FORM 270
APPENDIX (7): FIELD NOTES/ MEMO EXCERPT 272
APPENDIX (8): SAMPLE INFORMED CONSENT FORM 273
APPENDIX (9): MOE APPROVAL LETTER AND SUPERVISOR’S LETTER TO MINISTRY 275
APPENDIX (10): SAMPLE DATA ANALYSIS 277

REFERENCES ........................................................................................................................................ 280
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronyms</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>The UNESCO Associated Schools Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDS</td>
<td>Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BERA</td>
<td>The British Educational Research Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Qualitative Data Analysis Software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Central Elections Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMIP</td>
<td>The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FATAH</td>
<td>The Movement for the National Liberation of Palestine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAMAS</td>
<td>The Islamic Resistance Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRC</td>
<td>Human Rights Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRE</td>
<td>Human Rights Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
<td>The International Criminal Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICESCR</td>
<td>The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHRL</td>
<td>International Humanitarian Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIEP</td>
<td>The International Institute for Education Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>The International Monitory Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOE</td>
<td>Institute of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAS</td>
<td>League of Arab States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENA</td>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOEHE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOSA</td>
<td>Ministry of Social Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHCHR</td>
<td>The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPT</td>
<td>Occupied Palestinian Territory (ies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Palestinian Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCDC</td>
<td>The Palestinian Curriculum Development Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>Palestinian Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestinian Liberation Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDHERT</td>
<td>The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDHR</td>
<td>The Universal Declaration of Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>The United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRC</td>
<td>The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNGA</td>
<td>The United Nations General Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>The United Nations Children's Emergency Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNRWA</td>
<td>The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNSC</td>
<td>The United Nations Security Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPR</td>
<td>Universal Periodic Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPHRE</td>
<td>The World Programme for Human Rights Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WWII</td>
<td>World War II</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

Figure 5.1: An Israeli soldier opens a gate of the separation wall for Palestinian school children returning from school to their village near Tulkarem in the North of the Occupied West Bank (Reuters 2003) .......145

Figure 5.2: Solidarity with the elderly - 9th grade civics textbook - Chapter 4, Lesson 3, p.45 ............................................................................................................................................149

Figure 5.3: The media and the public opinion - 7th grade civics textbook - Chapter 3, Lesson 2, p.32 ..............................................................................................................................................150

Figure 6.1: 12th grade contemporary issues textbook. The section is entitled Human Rights in Islam ..............................................................................................................................................174

Figure 6.2: Illustration taken from the 9th grade civics textbook - Lesson on voluntary work ..............................................................................................................................................195

Figure 6.3: Illustration taken from the 8th grade civics textbook - Where students, both male and female, collaborate to put a poster up ..........196

Figure 7.1 : Poster raising awareness about the elections project - Hebron-2014 .........................................................................................................................................................209

Figure 7.2: Illustration from the 9th grade textbook - Participation in elections lesson .........................................................................................................................................211

Figure 7.3: ‘I too have an opinion’ – Illustration from 9th grade civics textbook ........................................................................................................................................215

Figure 7.4: ‘Thank you State Security for Protecting the Country from Teachers’ – Photo taken by activists on 23 February 2016 .........................221
Chapter (1)
Setting the Scene

1.1. Introduction

Human Rights Education (HRE) in Palestinian Authority (PA) Schools in the Occupied West Bank! Every time I uttered these words after being asked about my PhD research, by many Palestinians, some of them in the field of education and/or human rights, I was faced with the questions: ‘Is there such a thing?’ or ‘Is that a thing?’ These questions came with a dismissive shrug of the shoulder or cynical, disbelieving facial expressions. I wondered, why are Palestinians asking these questions? Palestinians since the 1960s and 1970s have used the human rights discourse in their struggle for freedom and self-determination. Currently, the official and unofficial or grass-roots methods used to end the Israel occupation and restore justice to the Palestinians are human rights based. The PLO/PA have numerous initiatives in the UN arena for example. Although in my view, these are largely symbolic political tactics rather than a genuine approach that reflects a commitment and belief in human rights mechanisms. This issue will be discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapters. Another example is the BDS Movement. This movement was initiated in 2005 by Palestinian civil society and has now become an unstoppable force internationally.

My answer to these dismissive and cynical questions was: Yes, HRE is a thing in Palestine. Most of the time it is not through schooling, but through extensive campaigns and trainings by civil society, and media coverage of human rights issues. This approach is not known or considered by the public as HRE. In schools, HRE is mainly embedded in the civics education curriculum or is done through extra-curricular projects in cooperation and coordination with NGOs, Palestinian and international, under the umbrella of democracy, citizenship, and/or other projects that involve students in and with the community. But even after explaining briefly, I was still faced with the same cynical look and the comment: So what?
In addition to my commitment and passion to and about HRE, which is explained in more detail under the personal motivation and ontology section in chapter (3), these skeptical responses made me more determined to uncover the mystery of HRE. I wanted to know more about the reasons behind its introduction in PA schools, how the main elements and agents of the education system, mainly students, teachers, school administration and the MOE\(^1\) perceive and construct HRE, understand it and act on it. I also wanted to unearth the linkages, if any, between HRE and the struggle against the colonial occupation which Palestinians have been living under for generations, as well as other manifestations of oppression and violence within Palestinian culture, social and political practices. These objectives are cast in the form of three research questions stated in section (2) of this chapter.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to make an in-depth exploration of the notion of human rights or their theoretical, philosophical, legal and/or ethical foundations. However, the fact that they underpin HRE makes it imperative to briefly highlight what human rights are before I delve into the details of this thesis. Human rights are what is in the UDHR and its further elaborations and additions that include various UN covenants and treaties (Donnelly 2003). Although these universal rights are contested in terms of their applicability and impact in different contexts, I hold the belief that they are the closest set of standards we have that allows us to achieve freedom, justice and equality keeping in mind that ‘the understanding and viability of human rights are intimately linked with the reach of public discussion, between persons and across borders. The viability and universality of human rights are dependent on their ability to survive open critical scrutiny in public reasoning’ (Sen 2004, p.356). Additionally, meaningful human rights are inspired by and support long-term human rights praxis and peoples’ struggles against oppression, power and privilege (Stammers 2009).

\(^1\)In 1994, the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education was established. In 1996 a new ministry was established for Higher Education and was called the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. In 2002, the two Ministries re-merged under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). However, until the time of writing this thesis, on the Ministry’s website the name is still stated as the Ministry of Education. Therefore, I will refer to it with the abbreviation MOE.
This thesis is divided into eight chapters. I sought to organise these chapters in a sequence that will take the reader from the general to the particular. I aim to tell the story of the emergence of HRE, looking at HRE with a critical lens. I examine its worth and ability to contribute to national Palestinian emancipation and the struggle of a colonised nation. Looking at both theory and practice, I explore how human rights and HRE are constructed in a multilayered, highly politicised and polarised context.

To be able to achieve these aims and answer the three research questions, I chose to conduct detailed field research. Starting with a pilot phase in the spring of 2013 and a main phase in the spring of 2014. Both field research visits are discussed and explained in chapter (4). During my field research I opted to utilise ethnographic methods like semi-structured interviews with individuals and groups. The answers to the semi-structures questions were elicited from a number of participants representing a broad spectrum of perspectives, including school students, academics and experts, teachers and government officials and activists. I also conducted classroom observations in selected schools. The selection criteria of the geographical locations and research participants are also discussed in detail chapter (4). Prior to the field research and during the data analysis, a thorough review of the literature was conducted on various topics such as: Palestinian education, education for social change, emancipatory education, HRE and its links to social change and conflict, human rights universality and cultural relativism and other human rights and education related disciplines in the context of conflict and post-colonialism. My ethnographic research is critical, as it takes the political, social, and cultural context into consideration and its results aim to propose emancipatory recommendations rather than being solely descriptive or interpretative.

This research contributes new knowledge in the field of HRE. I aim for this knowledge to be authentic and led by the voices of my research participants. This research is also put forward as a research piece of HRE criticism, which I will explain in detail in chapter (2). Additionally, it aims to encourage the reader to look at Palestinian education in general and HRE in Palestine in particular in a way that provokes questions and proposes a radical change to how HRE is done in
Palestine, aiming to contribute to the Palestinian struggle, and human rights and justice for the Palestinians.

This introduction chapter includes four sections. The second section states the three research questions and their links to the research methodology and critical ethnography used during the field research, in addition to the process of data analysis. I then give a detailed explanation of the education system in Palestine, and how the political context shapes it and dictates its formation, aims and direction. Finally, in the conclusion I highlight the main points of this chapter, draw inferences and describe how this introductory chapter paves the way to the following seven chapters, to the rest of the story.
1.2. Research Questions

‘To be a radical critic of existing social structures is to identify harms that are generated by existing arrangements, to formulate alternatives which mitigate those harms, and to propose transformative strategies for realising those alternatives’ (Wright 2007, p.26)

The first article of the UNDHERT states that: ‘Human rights education and training is essential for the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, in accordance with the principles of universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights’ (UNGA 2011a). Having worked in the field of HRE for a number of years, I always wondered about the actual impact of HRE in contexts of extreme injustice and conflict. My main focus and interest is Palestine where Palestinians have been struggling against colonial occupation for national liberation for decades. In the case of Palestine, where does HRE fit?

Numerous studies have attempted to unfold the complexities of the Palestinian education system and its relation to the Occupation, and struggles for freedom and human rights. However, in my thorough literature review, I found significant gaps in terms of gauging clear links between HRE within the Palestinian education system and the reality, such as: the perceptions on the grassroots level and the involvement of the community in planning, implementing and evaluating HRE projects and programmes in Palestine. I also discovered a lack of compatibility between universal standards and the models of HRE within the Palestinian context. Once these gaps were identified, I embarked on pilot field research to better understand HRE in the Palestinian context, in the Occupied West Bank in particular, as I was unable to access the Gaza Strip or Occupied East Jerusalem due to the movement restrictions imposed on Palestinians by the Occupation. From the literature review as well as the pilot field research, where I interviewed a number of academics, activists, teachers, head teachers, MOE officialas, students and conducted focus groups with activists and students in villages and cities in the Occupied West Bank (see appendix (1) for details), I was able to formulate the below three research questions:
• What are the sources of influence that shape human rights education (HRE) in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the Occupied West Bank?

• Considering the Palestinian context, what are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the Occupied West Bank about human rights in general and HRE in particular?

• To what extent does HRE inform students' engagement in social and/or political activism in the Occupied West Bank?

The three research questions aim to unpick the structures and methods of the implementation of HRE in the PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, how those implementing HRE and engaging with it perceive HRE, how they construct it within the particularities of Palestinian society, culture and politics. I am also investigating how HRE impacts the lives and actions of Palestinian students.

Through answering these questions, this research will problematise the ways and methods of the introduction and implementation of HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank. It will identify an alternative approach to HRE, digging beneath the surface of the facts or truths as presented particularly by the formal line of the MOE and funding/donor bodies, in order to reveal alternative possibilities to shape HRE discourse and practice within the Palestinian education system. Through asking these questions, I am able to untangle the past, present and future of HRE, and highlight the relationships and gaps in the discourse of HRE between the international and the local, the institutional level and the individual level, theory and praxis.

The sequence of the three research questions helped in formulating this research, and acted as an analytical framework for the data. By moving from the origins of the introduction of HRE within the Palestinian education system, to tackling the perceptions of individuals and groups about it, the research allowed for the juxtaposition between the original vision and purpose of HRE in Palestine and the reality, leading to the impact of HRE and its contribution, or lack of it, to the struggle for justice, dignity and positive change.
1.3. Education in Palestine

For over a century Palestinians have had foreign governments prescribe their curriculum, administrative policy, and teaching without concern for the needs of the Palestinian people. The combined influences of Turkish, British, [Jordanian, Egyptian] and Israeli domination have created an educational system which does not address the national needs of the Palestinians. This patchwork of hegemonic educational systems has worked against the basic needs of the Palestinian people (Van Dyke & Randall 2002), this will be discussed under sub-section (1.3.1.3).

The ongoing prolonged Israeli occupation of Palestine has overshadowed the historical, socio-economic and geo-political contemporary Palestinian scene since 1948. This Occupation has led to a multifaceted and complicated situation affecting all aspects of life in Palestine and for Palestinians including education. The legal implications of this complex context are highlighted under section (1.3.1), followed by the impact of the main political milestones on Palestinian society with a focus on education during the post-Oslo period. I will also discuss how due to the Occupation’s attempts to erase Palestinian culture and identity, strong links between education and Palestinian identity were created. In addition to that, I present the deformations, as a consequence of the Occupation, that caused fractures in the educational structures in Palestine, directly and indirectly. Finally, HRE within the PA education system will be discussed briefly as an introduction to the detailed presentation, contextualisation and critique in chapters (2), (5), (6), (7) and (8).

1.3.1. The Palestinian Education System: Structures and fractures

In the OPT there are systems that include institutions, laws, policies and regulations in place that should, in theory, shape and guide education. However, the fractures in these systems that are caused by a number of factors, primarily the Israel occupation, prevail.
1.3.1.1. The Legal Structure and Education

Underlying the current laws in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza (including Occupied East Jerusalem) is an amalgamation of Ottoman and British Mandate laws. In addition, many Jordanian laws are still applicable in the Occupied West Bank. In the Gaza Strip many Egyptian laws remain in force. Tribal law is also widely used. Add to this the PA era laws and Israeli military orders. East Jerusalem falls under the jurisdiction of Israeli law. This has created a complicated legal environment.

Laws enacted by the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) include Child Law, Disability Law, Labour Law, Public Health Law, and draft laws such as the Penal Code, the Juvenile Justice bill and the Education Law (PA 2010). The Palestinian Basic Law, which acts in lieu of a constitution, was passed by the PLC in 1997 and ratified by then-President Arafat in 2002. The Basic Law has been amended twice since the 2002 ratification; in 2003 it was amended to introduce a Prime Minister and in 2005 it was amended to conform to the new Election Law (Birzeit Institute of Law 2003; 2005). Christian and Islamic religious courts adjudicate the Civil Status Law, Family Law and Personal Status Law. These courts have their own legal character and act independently of government courts, with jurisdiction over issues related to custody, inheritance, birth registration, adoption and orphans (Save the Children 2011).

In June 2007, armed clashes broke out in the Gaza Strip between Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, and Fatah, The Movement for the National Liberation of Palestine, leading to Hamas taking over the Gaza Strip. As a result of this drift and polarisation between the two biggest political parties, the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip had two separate governments: Hamas formed a government in Gaza, a strip besieged by Israel and Egypt, and the PA formed a predominantly Fatah cabinet in the Occupied West Bank loyal to the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The division crippled the legislative role of the PLC, which further complicated the legal framework, leaving critical draft laws waiting for Palestinian unity. A number of laws have been passed by Presidential decrees such as the elections law.
The Palestinian Child Law was passed in 2004. This law has a number of articles that are in line with the UNCRC. Article (7) states that education is free in all PA schools for all grades. The law highlights the right of children to participate in decision-making, to have freedom of expression and to live with dignity in Articles (6), (2) and (7) respectively (Palestinian Child Law 2004). There is no Palestinian education law, but the Basic Law Article (24) states that:

‘every citizen shall have the right to education... It shall be compulsory until at least the end of the basic level... and shall be free in public schools and institutions’ (Amended Palestinian Basic Law 2003).

The PA is also committed to international agreements and decisions concerning children. One of the most important obligations that the PA has committed itself to is the Dakar Education For All Declaration and its action plan in 2000. It has also committed itself to the attainment of the MDGs (PA 2012).

In terms of the IHRL, in 1991, the PLO symbolically ratified the UNCRC and subsequently in 1995, on the occasion of Palestinian Children’s Day, further endorsed the Convention as a binding and applicable legal document that guides practices within the OPT for all children. In 2002, late President Arafat at the UNGA Special Session for Children reaffirmed the PA’s commitment (PA 2010). The PA continues to be bound by customary international law (Amnesty International 2011). This means that it should adhere to the UDHR in which the preamble and articles (25) and (26) refer to the wellbeing of the child, the right to education and human rights education, as well as the ICESCR articles (10),(13) and (14) and the ICCPR article (18).

In April 2014, after Palestine was admitted as a non-state observer member at the UN, the PLO ratified fifteen UN conventions and treaties. Among the fifteen UN conventions and treaties were: CEDAW, ICCPR, ICESCR, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the UNCRC. All these conventions have clear and specific articles about the right to education. The ratification of these conventions is sought to formalise the PA’s human rights obligations and subject it to monitoring and regular review by the relevant treaty bodies. However, until the point of writing this research, discussions were taking place between Palestinian civil society, academics, legal experts, activists and the PA on how
that would be implemented in light of the absence of a functioning PLC, a lack of clarity in the government’s structure and an absence of accountability and reliability because of Palestine’s political divisions. Furthermore, all PA structures including government, legislative body and president have long exceeded their terms, and elections are not a possibility in the near future.

In addition to the internal obstacles that hinder the implementation of a legal structure that supports the fulfillment of the rights of Palestinian children in general and their right to education in particular, the role of the Israeli occupation cannot be ignored. The primary responsibility lies with the conflicting parties under a prolonged situation of protracted occupation and a humanitarian crisis. Chief amongst these duty-bearers is Israel, the occupying power. The violations committed by Israel do not appear as isolated incidents. Rather, they are the result of systematic targeting and legal discrimination at the levels of the legislature, government, judiciary and the military (UNESCO 2012).

1.3.1.2. The Social Structure and Education
The Palestinian society has specific features that were formed by the dismemberment of Palestinian society in 1948, military occupation and the establishment of the PA in 1994 (Hilal 2009). Here I would add the first Palestinian Intifada in 1987, the second Intifada in 2000 and the Palestinian internal strife in 2007. As a result of these episodes in modern Palestinian history, the Israeli occupation took measures to deeply fragment Palestinian society, leading to the creation of different Palestinian groups living in separate geographical areas with different socio-economic and cultural characteristics. According to Hilal (2007), the PLO played a vital role in connecting Palestinian communities together, including the diaspora with home communities. However, the establishment of the PA marginalised PLO institutions, which further widened the gap between Palestinians living in PA controlled areas, and those who reside behind the green line or in diaspora. This is important when considering the Palestinian education system and its role in the struggle against the Occupation and its contribution to nation building; this will be discussed in detail in section (1.3.2).
With the formation of the PA, Palestinian civil society, which was the social structure that once served as a source of community support, provided services and was a mobilisation force for change and struggle against the Occupation, has undergone a profound transformation since the Oslo Accords. Civil society bodies have been transmogrified into professionally-based, foreign-funded and development-oriented centres (Hammami 2000). These organisations became de-politicised, and distance themselves from their popular base (Hovsepian 2008). This has negative implications for public participation and popular engagement in decision-making and the influence of the civil society on the PA’s decisions particularly in relation to education. This will be highlighted below when I discuss the institutionalisation of the Palestinian reformist education vision, and explore it in further detail within the analysis chapters (5),(6) and (7).

In spite of the negative impacts of the failed peace process and the Oslo Accords on Palestinian society, some prominent activists and academics saw positive aspects, particularly in terms of education:

‘If any good came out of the Oslo agreement of 1993, it is the fact that the Palestinians took charge of the education portfolio and that, for the first time ever, they had the chance to prepare their own school curricula and to run their education system (Baramki 2010a)’.

Others questioned the ability of the new education system to restore the destruction caused by historical legacies which have emptied the educational process of any social and economic relevance (Mazawi 2000). They question the ability of Palestinian policymakers to devise, not only a meaningful educational policy, but also a humanist and empowering one that would be responsive to marginalised social groups such as women, refugees and less established rural localities (Hilal 1996). This meaningful, humanist and empowering education would eventually lead to breaking up of the reproductive and divisive role that education has played in serving earlier political regimes (Mazawi 2000).
1.3.1.3. A Palestinian Education System for the First Time

The MOE, which was established in 1994, inherited a weak, neglected and fragmented education system. Between 1949-1967 the West Bank fell under the Jordanian system of education and the Gaza Strip under the Egyptian system. Under the Israeli military administration post-1967, the curriculum content remained almost identical to that of Jordan and Egypt (UNESCO 2007) and elements in textbooks relating to Palestinian national identity and the Palestinian question were likely to be censored (Alayan 2012). Local NGOs played an immense role in the education sector, especially in the absence of a Palestinian government. UNRWA has been responsible for the education of Palestinian refugees since 1948, within the Palestinian lands occupied in 1967 and hosting countries, particularly Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Upon the transfer of authority from Israel to the PA, two days before the commencement of the school year 1994/1995, the education sector was in a shambles. Schools and classrooms were overcrowded. ‘Many school buildings were in a state of despair and books were dated’ (Hovsepian 2008, p.122). ‘No overhaul was attempted in that year, except for reverting to the uncensored versions of the existing textbooks and the outlawing of corporal punishment’ (Barakat 2007, p.194). The MOE has performed the immense task of keeping the education sector functioning in the transitional period.

While making sure the education system was running and avoiding chaos, the MOE embarked on a process of development. This process included the improvement of the service by increasing the number of schools and improving enrollment rates. The other aspect was to focus on the administrative framework of the MOE that supports the development and improvement of the education system. Finally, they assessed the gaps and needs of the sector in order to improve the quality of education. In 1995, the PCDC was established and mandated to develop, in one year, a plan for a new curriculum to be gradually implemented over five years (Hovsepian 2008). Between 1995 and 1996 two documents were produced which guided the work of the MOE. First, in 1995, the UNESCO report on primary and secondary education in the OPT, secondly, in 1996, was the Abu-Lughod et al first Palestinian curriculum for general education: The comprehensive plan.
By 1999 the MOE was able to form mechanisms for planning, budgeting and coordination as well as unify the education system in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Over the years the number of schools built increased and illiteracy rates declined. In this new situation, departing from foreign control, near universal enrollment in primary schools had been achieved. The first Palestinian textbooks for Grades 1–12 were developed between 1998 and 2006. Some were not completed until 2008 (Alayan 2012). One of the most important departures from the old Jordanian and Egyptian curricula was the inclusion of human rights, civic, health and environment Education (UNICEF 2011). In the year 2000, the MOE published a five-year plan, which was supported by the IIEP, and received praise for its links with general development issues such gender, poverty, and participation (Lempinen & Repo 2002). This plan guided the development of the education sector. While this was considered an achievement, below I highlight how the new Palestinian curriculum has diverted from the progressive vision that was initially envisioned for the Palestinian education system. The Palestinian education vision is discussed in detail in chapter (5).

The PA is forced to plan for a complex mix of emergency and regular situations (UNICEF 2011). As the MOE was ready to move towards improving the quality of education, developing a new national curriculum and advancing teachers’ training, it was faced by a new wave of violence in September 2000, just as the school year was starting. Furthermore, the internal strife of 2007 in addition to the continuing cycle of violence, and the prolonged occupation led to devastating impacts on the education system. The PA has an unstable financial position that almost completely depends on international funding for survival. This funding is politically motivated and highly unreliable which negatively affects education in terms of process and quality. This will be discussed in more detail under chapters (5) and (6).

In spite of the challenges stated above, the MOE realised noticeable achievements. However, it is important to highlight two negative aspects: the neglect of major aspects of the progressive vision of the reformist educators, and the lack of popular and social engagement. Prior to the formation of the PA and in the context of the first Intifada, Palestinian activist educators and NGOs who
specialised in education, and were connected to social and political movements, played an important role in shaping ideas for building and reforming the education sector. They drafted ideas and plans for the creation of a Palestinian curriculum, they wanted to put an end to a style of education that relied on rote learning and discouraged critical thinking. They had a vision of a curriculum that would contribute to the Palestinian struggle for freedom and social change which was in part spurred by the experience of alternative education during the first Intifada (Velloso de Santisteban 2002).

During the first Intifada, there was a complex relationship between revolt and conformist behaviors (Usher 1991), considering the active role children played in the uprising. ‘The Intifada resulted in a loss of literacy and numeracy skills, but a growth in self-reliance and self-esteem’ (Mahshi & Bush 1989, p.274). In terms of pedagogy, given that the Israeli occupation banned education for Palestinians, closing down their schools and universities, education was provided by Palestinian communities and activists in a semi-clandestine manner. Under such extraordinary circumstances, teachers experimented with the introduction of study guides and self-help packets which they wrote for students. In such a context, the content of education was made more relevant to the conditions of life. ‘Students were able to interact with one another freely and teachers improvised as they sought new ways to teach children’ (Hovsepian 2008, p.116). However, once education was institutionalised under the PA, such aspects were restricted.

With the creation of the MOE and subsequently the PCDC, the centre received much praise for the quality of internal Palestinian curriculum debate it generated, its secular and political independence and its highly progressive and reform-oriented approach (Brown 2002). While the PCDC received much praise, there are a number of aspects within the PCDC’s creation and its supposed reformist approach that call for a thorough investigation. In particular the issue of abandoning the liberation agenda, or what I refer to as the rights-based approach, and adopting a state-oriented, or what I call in this research a statist approach to education. This is discussed in detail in chapter (5).
Progressive educators, and those involved in putting together the first curriculum plan, were disappointed by the direct interference of the deputy minister of the MOE who took over the task of producing the actual curriculum and textbooks. The curriculum that was subsequently published in 1998 toned down the progressive elements of the plan and the subsequent report published by the PCDC (Mazawi 2000; Velloso de Santisteban 2002; Brown 2002). The PA adopted the banking concept of education. Furthermore, when the MOE embarked on implementing some of the ideas recommended by the educational reformists, key academics who took part in putting together the initial ideas and recommendations were excluded. Popular engagement and consultations were overlooked; instead there was a heavy reliance on MOE internal consultations and workshops that occasionally included representatives from some Palestinian NGOs (Hovsepian 2008).

The MOE still struggles with the contradictory approaches between individuals who call for radical change in the education system and those who lean towards traditional methods and the status quo. The Palestinian education system still suffers from a lack of a unified philosophy and vision, as well as creativity and the space for critical thinking and innovation. It does not meet the needs of Palestinian society, which is going through a transitional phase and fighting a brutal coloniser. In chapter (5), these contradictions and lack of coherence between the needs of the Palestinian society and the education system are discussed in detail.

1.3.1.4. Education in the Face of Political Adversity
The responsibilities of the Israeli occupation toward the Palestinian population are codified in both the Hague Convention Regulations (1906) and the Fourth Geneva Convention related to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War (1949). The Israel authorities legally bear three basic responsibilities: maintaining the security of the territories; insuring public order and safety; and acting for the welfare of the local population. The Israel authorities do not recognise the applicability of these international conventions (Foundation for Middle East Peace 1994). The PA, in the Occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip and partially in
East Jerusalem, provides services like health and education. UNRWA provides these services in refugee camps in OPT and other host countries.

The Israel Authority’s illegal policies in the OPT systematically violate Palestinian children’s right to education (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights 2009). The Israeli army targets schools with shelling and raids, students and teachers get stopped at checkpoints, and they are humiliated, beaten, arrested and sometimes killed. Imposed curfews force schools to close for many days and sometimes months. The Israeli illegal annexation and separation wall has a devastating impact on education. The Israeli government’s decision to withhold tax returns\(^2\) and deny the PA from accessing its major funding source, negatively affect the education process. Tax returns withheld by the Israeli government are mainly spent on salaries of PA civil servants including teachers. Teachers in PA schools have to endure months without pay. Prolonged teachers’ strikes take place bringing the education process to a halt. The financial instability within the PA is due to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli government and the total dependence on politically motivated donor funds has led to less investment in the education sector.

The UN Human Rights Special Rapporteur for the OPT, John Dugard, wrote in a report in August 2005:

‘The quality of education has deteriorated because schools have been obliged to shorten teaching hours as a result of wall gate-opening times. Furthermore, children are forced to drop out of school either to help supplement diminishing family incomes or because their parents can no longer afford to send them to school’ (UNGA 2005a).

During the first Intifada, prolonged closures of schools and universities were frequent. Education effectively became illegal. Teachers and students had to

\(^2\) Before the PA was established, the Israeli government taxed imports and exports in the occupied areas and withheld payroll taxes from visiting Palestinian workers. In April 1994, the PLO and the Israeli government signed the Gaza–Jericho Agreement, part of the OSLO accords, which included the Protocol on Economic Relations between the two parties, also known as the Paris Protocols. These theoretically gave the PA the right to collect taxes directly from Palestinians living in the PA controlled areas, and indirectly via Israel. Israel continues to collect customs duties and the “value-added tax” on imports that come through Israeli ports that are meant for the OPT. Israel is meant to send back the value-added tax that Palestinians pay for Israeli goods, as well as any excise taxes that Palestinians have to pay for fuel, cigarettes, and alcohol. Palestinians who work in Israel provide another important source of revenue for the PA. Within this agreement the PA was to collect direct taxes, however Israel continues to collect taxes on imports, exports, and income tax from Palestinians working in Israel (BTselem 2012).
resort to underground classes. The community came together to support students by lending them spaces to conduct their classes. The Israeli authorities called gatherings of students and teachers ‘cells of illegal Education’ (Baramki 2010a). ‘At least 10% of the schools were utilised as military camps and detention centers’ (Alzaroo & Hunt 2003, p.170).

During the second Intifada, which began in September 2000 as the school year was starting, the attacks became more violent and included shelling schools, using them as military and detention centers, and the killing and imprisonment of students and teachers. The systematic destruction and abuse of Palestinian educational facilities resulted in material damage and financial loss, and seriously affected the education of hundreds of thousands of children. The widespread destruction or confiscation of vital MOE files made the rebuilding of the education sector extremely difficult (Halileh 2002).

The construction of the Israeli illegal annexations and separation wall hinders the ability of teachers and students to reach schools. Some villages, like the village of Azzun Atma in the Northern city of Qalqilia, is besieged by the wall and gated. Students and teachers go through an Israeli army operated gate twice a day. The psychological impact of such a process is hard to measure. Settlers’ attacks are a main source of disruption of Palestinian education and a violation of the right to education. For example, in Hebron (South of the Occupied West Bank), where colonial settlers’ violence is at its peak in the old city, students and teachers face daily harassment under the watch of Israeli soldiers who deny their responsibility to protect them.

These are just a few examples of the bleak and unfair reality that all those who are part of the Palestinian education process face every day. These acts are in effect violating international law. Theoretically, the Fourth Geneva Convention protects Palestinians under Occupation. Article 50 states that ‘the Occupying Power shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children’.
The fighting in Gaza between Hamas and Fatah led to the formation of two governments, neither of which has real authority on the ground, both struggling to survive under the heavy hand of the Occupation. The implications of this split were devastating, impacting ordinary Palestinians negatively in terms of access to services and heightened violations of rights by both governments.

Such a divide and a human rights violations-filled atmosphere negatively affected education in the OPT. The PA in the Occupied West Bank and the Hamas government in Gaza simply did not communicate, or so they claim, leading to disintegrating policies and plans. Some policies in the Gaza strip imposed by Hamas were alarming, like banning male teachers from teaching in all female schools, or imposing the head-cover on school girls and female university students. In 2008, teachers in Gaza were ordered by the Ramallah-based PA to stay home or have their salaries withheld, even face dismissal. At the same time, the Hamas government threatened to sack striking teachers. The imposition of loyalty to a specific political party through education and the education institutions has been a characteristic of the Palestinian divide. Arbitrary arrests of young people on both sides based on their political affiliation became the norm.

The Palestinian education system at the quantitative indicators level seemed to be progressing, however, it did not address the needs of the community and was not responsive to Palestinians’ indigenous needs (Nasru 1993). The education system in the OPT remains fragmented and lacks a unified philosophy and vision. Issues of discrimination and violence alarmingly feature within Palestinian education. These issues will be discussed in detail in the analysis chapters (5), (6) and (7).
1.3.2. Role of Education in the Palestinian Context: Struggle, Identity and Nationalism

Formal schooling is by definition political, the educational system will be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy, over the definitions of legitimate authority and culture (Apple 2003). Education for Palestinians has been one of the areas of struggle; it has been political and connected to the movement of national liberation, political, social and cultural formation under the different occupying authorities. For example, under the British mandate the limited number of academic institutions dedicated to Palestinians promulgated an Arab if not a Palestinian national consciousness among students. While the British Mandatory authorities in the Department of Education deemed the local population unfit to determine their curriculum, and therefore excluded them from this decision-making process, the Arabs [Palestinians] never ceased to resist this policy of tutelage (Foster 2007). The Chief Secretary of the Government of Palestine in Geneva in 1934, stated that Arabs sought control of education in order to raise the social level of the Arab population to lead it on the highway of independence of foreign rule, as well as to preserve the national culture against an invasion of an alien people and culture (Al-Tibawi 1956).

As early as the year 1923, Palestinian students were learning that Palestine was its own territorial entity whose geography merited separate treatment from Syria (as was the case under Ottoman rule). *The Natural Geography of Syria and Palestine*, a book written by Sabri Sharif Abd al-Hadi and taught in schools at the time, describes Jerusalem as the capital of the country, shifting the national focal point from Damascus or perhaps the Arab world at large to Palestine. Numerous evidence from school curriculums, textbooks and interviews with former teachers during the British mandate in Palestine support the idea that Palestinian movement persisted to re-educate the people, albeit precipitated by the British. This was a crucial element in the development of the Palestinian national consciousness (Foster 2007).
‘Education was not universally valued among Palestinians when I was young. Only the rich members of the professional classes expected their children to study. Becoming a nation of refugees, of people living under a destructive, impoverishing military rule, has changed attitudes. Education is seen as one of very few escape routes’ (Baramki 2010b, p.3).”

The quote above and the examples from the British mandate and Ottoman periods show that Palestinians have for a long time envisioned education as an escape route from injustice as well as a tool to protect and cultivate their identity. Throughout the periods of various colonial occupations, they regarded education as a tool for achieving freedom, decolonisation, protecting their culture, keeping the social fabric strong, maintaining their national identity and building their state. Education was deemed important among activists as it has the potential to empower marginalised groups and enables social change. I call this the Palestinian Utopia in relation to the role of education. But is this Palestinian Education Utopia an exaggeration of the reality? Is it a myth? Has education in the Palestinian context been turned into a symbol, fetishised, instead of looked at realistically? (Sayigh 1985).

Quantitative research shows that the enrolment of Palestinians in the education system, particularly in the OPT, is higher than rates in the Arab countries or even when compared to low-income countries. However, this is not to be generalised. There is a need to take the time and place into consideration. For example, in the 1970s there was a high-drop out rate, residual illiteracy and low completion rates (Sayigh 1985). The same issues prevailed during the first Intifada in the OPT. In the diaspora, particularly in Palestinian refugees camps in Lebanon, pockets of non-education are present, as well as in city slums where Palestinians reside in Israel and in remote Occupied West Bank villages (ibid). It is a popular fallacy that attitudes of Palestinian refugees to education are exceptional. Similar attitudes towards education as the highest priority have been reported among refugees all over the world (Barakat 2008).
The issue of high educational attainment among Palestinians at different periods of time in relation to their unique experience is complex. Abu Lughod provided a list of justifications for this attainment: indigenous values that emphasised the virtue of learning; expanding markets in Arab states where Palestinians found refuge; and the Palestinian recognition that their defeat in 1948 by Israel was partly related to the superior education of their adversary. The recovery of Palestine and the Palestinian quest for independence and sovereignty was directly related to the acquisition of skills and culture, which are implied in the process of higher education (Abu Lughod 2000).

While this liberation strategy through education is not unique to Palestinians, it has been a strong discourse within Palestinian society, academics and politicians within historical Palestine or the diaspora. This discourse and view was reflected in the first Palestinian education philosophy envisioned and written by the Educational planning department, Planning center within the PLO in 1972 (PLO Department of Education Planning 1972). In practice, linking education to the struggle against the Occupation proved appealing to Palestinian students. The metaphor, education as a weapon, has been cited by Palestinian teachers as one of the few ways of motivating children to focus on their studies during the second intifada (Save the Children 2002). This metaphor is not only true when linked to the struggle against the Occupation, but also relevant to social groups that experience discrimination and seek social change within the Palestinian society. I found this true when I talked to female students and teachers during my field research, that same metaphor encouraged them to excel as it was seen as a weapon to claim their rights and gain social status in a highly restrictive and patriarchal society. In chapters (6) and (7) I discuss a number of examples that manifest the determination of female students and teachers to use education as a tool for resisting socio-economic, political as well as religious restrictions.

Another aspect that can be used to question the notion of linking education to national liberation and identity is individualism versus the collective good, or personal and national liberation (Barakat 2008). For Palestinian refugees education is linked to employability rather than nationalism or the aspiration to liberation. It is argued that Palestinians in the diaspora [without generalising]
became ‘agents of development and change everywhere but contribute less to their own country and communities’ (Zahlan & Zahlan 1977, p.106). Hence, Palestinians, particularly refugees, achieved individual/personal liberation at least in terms of socio-economic status from an alternative life as dependent refugees (Barakat 2008). I would argue here, that educated Palestinians, as individuals, could contribute enormously in terms of nation-building in Palestine after liberation. ‘From a moral perspective, large numbers of well-educated individuals within Palestinian society provide some immunity against attempts to dissolve Palestinian national identity and the Palestinian socio-economic fabric’ (Development Studies Programme 2005, p.46). Also, I would argue here that the education Palestinians are being exposed to within the OPT is directing them towards an individualistic and neoliberal type of economy and society rather than a collective aspiration for liberation and national emancipation. This is expressed in the MOE strategies and policy documents. This particular point is discussed in detail under sub-section (5.2.3.1).

Post-Oslo education in the OPT has prevented Palestinians from achieving emancipation, as is discussed later on in this section and in subsequent chapters. However, as I mention above, either inside the fragmented geographical and social pieces within historic Palestine or in the diaspora, education has played a defensive role. It has prevented Palestinians from being eliminated as political, intellectual and cultural beings. For example, the Israeli occupation army deliberately attacks Palestinian academic institutions and cultural centers; this is a pattern apparent under successive Israeli governments. The aim behind such attacks is to reduce Palestinians to a mere physical existence. Education has played a defensive role and prevented the achievement of this aim (Barakat 2010).

The vision put together by Abu Lughod et al in 1996 under the Comprehensive Plan for the Development of the first Palestinian Curriculum for General Education, while I contest its aim and vision in chapter (5), did encourage critical thinking and the mainstreaming of values akin to human rights. Even this vision was disregarded by the MOE when the PCDC ceased to be an independent entity and fell under the control of the MOE. In the current Palestinian textbooks
there are rigid concepts of nationalism and Islamisation which trump values such as equality and acceptance within the Palestinian society for example. The issue of islamisation and the confused understanding and presentation of nationalism based on different understandings and orientations of the ruling body, mainly the PA, will be discussed in detail in the analysis chapters (5), (6) and (7).

The Palestinian textbooks also reveal inconsistancies in terms of how they deal with Israel, borders, means and strategies for liberation, and the notion of statehood versus liberation, among other issues. These inconsistencies reflect the tensions and contradictions within internal Palestinian discourse in relation to liberation and self-determination. There is also little agreement linked to forward-looking ideas about borders and the [return and] integration of Palestinian refugees (Brown 2002).

Nationalism in the current education system, particularly through school textbooks, the morning school routine and the symbols in schools encourage blind loyalty to the ruling authority; the PA in the case of the Occupied West Bank. The notion of liberation is currently linked to the statehood discourse and the two state solution as proposed and imposed by the PA with no leeway for arguing against it or critically engaging with it. This nationalistic vision as imposed by the PA has became the only vision. This issue highlights gaps and disengagements between policy makers within the PA/MOE and the people on the ground, the PA political agenda and the public vision in such troubled times. While activism and people’s struggles internationally are moving towards justice, the PA is still tied to the empty vision of statehood and unattainable sovereignty.

For example, during one of my interviews with an MOE official at the PCDC, he said:

‘Since the year 1994 the ministry’s plan was to unify our homeland, one homeland (watan wahad) with two wings (West Bank and Gaza) where there is one curriculum as the curriculum is part of the sovereignty on the ground’.

He continued

‘Part of the PA’s plan and our strategy in the MOE is to have a Palestinian curriculum to unify the West Bank and Gaza and, god willing, unify Palestinians in the future’.
These quotes reflect the PA’s policy to provide Palestinian students with a single vision of what Palestine and the national liberation agenda is or what it might be. This PA official also disregarded the millions of Palestinian refugees living in diaspora since 1948. These examples are stated to shed light on the gaps and detachment between the Palestinian education system and the popular vision. This issue is discussed in detail in chapter (5).

I have decided to discuss in detail the linkages between education, nationalism and the struggle for liberation in Palestine and for Palestinians in this section to highlight the importance of this issue. Education is a potentially emancipatory process that may offer a means to a different and a better future, both for the individual and for society (Osler & Starkey 2010). The Palestinian education system according to Barakat (2010) failed to realise the Palestinian ambition for emancipation. It does not allow for a conscious critical formation of a collective identity that is important in this critical point in our history. In the following section, I will present a brief about HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank and link it to notions of liberation, national identity and struggle.

1.3.3. Human Rights Education in Palestine
For decades, Palestinian education activists and reformists had a vision for the Palestinian education system. They saw in education a way to enable every Palestinian to have adequate broad knowledge, positive values of participation, modernity, equal coexistence of societies and democracy (Abu-Lughod 1996). They also wanted to transform society by transforming its members through education (Hovsepian 2008). During the early stages of the development of the vision and philosophy of the Palestinian education system, education activists and reformists focused on pedagogy. They contested the banking concept of education in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits (Freire [1970] 1993) and invoked vocabulary consistent with Friere, Dewey and Maxine Greene (Hovsepian 2008). Abu-Lughod, a prominent Palestinian education reformist and the first to develop a Palestinian education comprehensive plan, firmly believed that education can best be seen as:
'The agency [vehicle] for the promotion of development of the child and the nation and one which can contribute to the cultivation of civic culture that promotes not only democracy and free thinking but a democratic and deliberative method of achieving these goals' (ibid, p.164).

These ideas are consistent with the essence of HRE. However, in reality the vision became institutionalised under the MOE following the Oslo Accords and the picture differed.

The new unified Palestinian curriculum in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip substituted the Jordanian and Egyptian curricula which were used before the creation of the PA in 1994. Introducing the language of human rights in the Palestinian curriculum was a great achievement. Citizenship Education requires formal knowledge of human rights (Osler & Starkey 1996, p.85), this is reflected in the Palestinian curriculum where HRE has been introduced to the new Palestinian schooling system mainly through Citizenship or Civics education (Tarbiyya Madaniyya) and Contemporary Issues (Qadaya Mu’asira). The process of creating the curriculum and textbooks is highly centralised and almost completely controlled by the MOE. The institutionalisation of the education vision led to the abandonment of a number of reformist ideas, mentioned above. The implementation of the vision was impacted by the Palestinian political, social and cultural context and external influences.

Unlike the original education vision of the PLO, the MOE’s plans and policies have a vague focus on citizenship and human rights. In 2008 the MOE developed a five year plan focusing on ensuring equitable access to education, enhancing the internal efficiency of the education system, improving the quality of education, and education that was relevant to the needs of society at large. The plan maintained the position that education is a basic human right and a vital tool for instilling moral values and civic responsibility. The plan sought to guarantee citizens’ equitable access to a comprehensive education system and better prepare Palestinian citizens, particularly its youth, for the future. This included the modernisation of the curriculum in line with the PA’s vision of a future Palestinian state – a state with a knowledge-based economy, connected to a global community that embraces humanistic values and is tolerant (MEHE 2008).
The MOE’s 2011-2013 strategic plan stressed that education is a human right for all, focusing on the aspiration to bridge the remaining gender gap and have better access to education for students with special needs. It linked the role of education in contributing to building an independent and democratic Palestinian state based on respect for human rights and citizenship that guarantees rights and duties to all its citizens on an equal basis. It adhered to the values of humanity, religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the international community. Under its strategic pillars the plan highlighted education that raised awareness of human rights and gender equality.

MOE officials emphasised that human rights language is dominant in the curriculum, especially in the civics and contemporary issues books. However, they do not provide pedagogical guidance to teachers on how to tackle these themes. In spite of stating human rights and citizenship values in the MOE’s plans, neither HRE nor citizenship education are mentioned in the MOE’s Annual Narrative Progress Reports. For example, the only mention of participation in the 2012 report for example was of students participating in cultural events and in terms of any topics outside of the school curriculum, the report mentions health education and environmental initiatives. In addition to the confusion created by the contradictory vision and method of implementation, during the two phases of my field research I have witnessed behaviours by teachers, head teachers, and other education staff within schools that contradict human rights values, such as the excessive use of corporal punishment as a classroom management strategy and the use of degrading and humiliating language against the students. Such conduct in the majority of cases passes with no accountability or reporting.

Civics teachers are not specialised and do not receive sufficient guidance or training on how to teach topics related to human rights, democracy or controversial issues. The training provided by the MOE through the National Institute for Educational Training provides teachers with training on issues related to human rights, also a number of NGOs, Palestinian and international, provide teachers working at PA schools with similar training. However, the numbers of teachers who attend these trainings is limited and the impact is rarely monitored.
or evaluated. In addition to this, based on the interviews I conducted with MOE officials, teachers and academics, there is no monitoring of what the impact is on HRE in schools. There is no information of what actually happens in classrooms, especially in civics classes where human rights are being taught, which according to the MOE are linked to the daily lives of the students.

1.4. Conclusion
In this introductory chapter, I gave an overview and a general picture about education in Palestine. Education in Palestine and for Palestinians represents a complicated set of relations between individuals; individuals and institutions; politics; law; society and a lifelong struggle. HRE plays a significant role within these multilayered relations. Through my research, I have identified three research questions, through which I attempted to better understand and unpick the nature of HRE provided in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, how it is perceived by various stakeholders and how it is linked to the daily lives of Palestinian students. I hope that this research will enable me to deconstruct the discourses of HRE and reveal the layers of meanings within a highly politicised and contested context. This research aims to enable educators, academics, researchers and activists to view HRE in Palestine from a critical but constructive perspective rather than limiting the view to the cynical lens.

In the following chapter, I will use HRE-related literature to highlight the process through which HRE developed globally, particularly in the early 1990s. From this basis, I will move to various HRE approaches in different contexts, particularly those within conflict and post-conflict contexts, discussing these approaches from critical academic and practical perspectives, with a particular focus on the case of the Occupied West Bank.
Chapter (2)

Human Rights Education: A Contextualised View of a Global Concept

2.1. Introduction

Education operates as a multiplier. When the right to education is effectively guaranteed, it enhances the enjoyment of all individual rights and freedoms. Depriving people from their right to education hinders their ability to enjoy many rights and freedoms (Tomaševski 2001). ‘Whether we adopt a fixed or malleable conception of human rights, or a transmission or construction conception of education, from a top–down human rights perspective people need to be informed and adopt relevant values, and from a bottom–up perspective people need to be empowered to participate – both involving education’ (McCowan 2013, p.160). On a global level, the link between education and human rights is enshrined in a number of UN documents, and various UN mechanisms and forums which provide a legal and institutional framework. This framework gives an insight into the nature and purpose of education (Waldron 2010) within human rights discourse. In addition to the UN level, HRE is discussed, developed and framed in regional and local documents and translated into practice. This has created a global climate in which HRE has become part of the modern state’s human rights repertoire (Cardenas 2005).

In spite of this global adoption of HRE, there are diverse perspectives on what exactly HRE is and does (Bajaj 2011). In this chapter, using a historical trajectory, I map out the numerous definitions of HRE, looking at HRE in theory and practice. I highlight how HRE has developed in content, pedagogy and purpose. These three elements appear in UN documents post-1995 as education about, through and for human rights. The numerous definitions of HRE are subtly different in their formulation of goals and principles (Flowers 2003). In this chapter, I follow Flowers’ (2003) groupings: 1) inter-governmental bodies, mainly UN agencies, Council of Europe (CoE) and the League of Arab States (LAS), 2) NGOs and grassroots movements, 3) academics and educationalists. I link HRE as a concept to social and economic changes globally, and identify gaps in the conceptualisation of the concept and its implementation.
Following this review, I move to problematising HRE vis-à-vis the case of Occupied Palestine, and the Occupied West Bank in particular. Since I follow a critical constructivist approach, as explained in chapter (3), I draw on critical literature that shapes my understanding of HRE as a global concept versus its applicability and efficacy in the Occupied West Bank’s politicised, multi-layered and complicated context. Through this critical viewpoint, I re-conceptualise HRE and place it within a localised milieu where it could contribute to the struggle for freedom, self-determination, decolonisation and justice.

2.2. HRE Definitions

HRE has been the subject of rapidly growing attention by the human rights community, and its potential implications are far-reaching. However, this area of activity remains poorly understood (Cardenas 2005). Even human rights educators struggle to define what they do (Flowers 2003). The struggle to understand the exact meaning of HRE can be attributed to a number of reasons: first, the presence of various definitions produced by different actors and numerous models reflecting varied practices grounded in different histories, socio-economic locations and ideological frameworks (Bajaj 2012). Second, the definition can be elusive because of the variety and quantity of activity that takes place in the name of HRE (Flowers 2003). Third, the processes of adapting HRE create variations in the meaning, aims and types of HRE as pressure from above tries to de-politicise it and pressure from below attempts to maintain its link to the struggle for justice (Bajaj 2012). Finally, while there is an overlap in the definitions and a general understanding that HRE uses international human rights law and international humanitarian law as its normative basis, differences remain in the perspectives and implementation. In this chapter, I refer to the process of implementation as HRE praxis or HRE appropriation. These two terms will be defined and contextualised within the critical review of the literature in the sections below.
2.2.1. Definitions by Inter - Governmental Bodies

In this section I highlight the main definitions of HRE by inter-governmental bodies, namely: UN agencies, Council of Europe (CoE) and the League of Arab States (LAS). I underline the main developments in HRE as a concept over time and place, and explore the challenges and pitfalls in the definitions produced by these bodies.

2.2.1.1. HRE at the UN Level

From the outset, UN instruments have identified a strong link between education and human rights. Definitions moved from generic statements towards a blueprint for HRE, particularly where the aims of education uses human rights lexicon. Additionally, the development of the link between human rights and education and subsequently HRE within UN instruments coincided with socio-political changes globally. This mirrors the way the human rights discourse has changed and developed.

UNESCO has a leading role in promoting respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms through education. The UNESCO constitution (1945) was the first document that initiated the link between education and human rights, maintaining that UNESCO shall contribute to:

‘… Peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedoms…’ (UNESCO 1945).

The UNESCO charter also affirms that:

‘Education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern’ (ibid).

The charter tackles the issue of pedagogy, maintaining that ‘educational methods best [be] suited to prepare the children of the world for the responsibilities of freedom’. The idea of the ‘responsibilities of freedom’ in the UNESCO charter implies the importance of the agency of children and taking action to obtain and
maintain freedom. Hence, education is not only about knowledge but also about skills and agency.

The preamble of the UDHR stresses the importance of ‘teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms’. Article (26) affirms that education should be directed to:

‘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’ (Article 26, Paragraph 2).

The UDHR focuses on the purposes of education and education as means for ensuring respect of human rights and the principles of the UN without saying how it should be done. Whilst the UDHR is the foundational instrument of the human rights regime, it was strengthened in the 1960s by the drafting of the two covenants and followed by a number of conventions. Education is featured in the majority of the conventions and declarations since the 1960s. Article (13) of the ICESCR (1966) is an expression of article (26) of the UDHR but it adds to it ‘Education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society’. This addition links the role of education to the right to political participation reflected in article (21) of the UDHR. In spite of the fact that this is a convention for social and cultural rights, it does not mention the role of social political movements and people’s struggles which link directly to notions of freedom, justice and equality.

A number of UN conventions that focus on particular groups such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNGA 2007a), and the UN Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples (UNGA 2007b) stated that the aim of education should be to combat prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination and ensure tolerance, mutual understanding and equality through textbooks and the adaptation of teaching methods. These conventions also highlight the role of education in empowering vulnerable and marginalised groups.
‘States Parties undertake to adopt immediate, effective and appropriate measures [...] to combat stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices relating to persons with disabilities, including those based on sex and age, in all areas of life [...] Measures to this end include [...] fostering at all levels of the education system, including in all children from an early age, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities’ (UNGA 2007a).

The aims of education within the UNCRC are specified in article (29):

‘Education of the child shall be directed to: (a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; (b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations; (c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own; (d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin; (e) The development of respect for the natural environment’.

Whilst there is some repetition of the language of UDHR and other UN conventions as mentioned earlier, article (29) of the UNCRC contains some interesting additions. Article (29/d) states that education should aim to prepare the child for their life in a free society. This should not implying that children are citizens in the making and that they do not have the rights of adults, but should be interpreted in light of article (12) of the UNCRC:

‘States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child’ (UNGA 1989).

In practice, this flattens the hierarchical structures in schools where teachers and parents are considered to have superior knowledge and experience and allows children to actively participate in discussions and decision-making processes. Additionally, the term preparation in article (29/d) should encourage the provision of knowledge and skills that allows children to be able to positively participate as well as the provision of a safe environment where children are not afraid of expressing their opinions and views.
In addition to UN conventions, HRE developed through programmes, congresses and meetings. In 1953, UNESCO launched the UNESCO Associated Schools Programme (ASP). During this launch, there was an articulation of the link between human rights and education and the concept of HRE emerged in 1978 based on the principles and considerations of the International Congress on the Teaching of Human Rights (UNESCO 1978). However, it was not until 1995 that there was a formal definition of HRE stated in the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, 1995-2004 (UNGA 1996).

Operationalising human rights within education started with UNESCO’s ASP in 1953, which was the first attempt to teach human rights in formal school setting in co-operation with National Commissions in interested countries (Kidd 1968). The main principles, aims and goals of ASP were to promote international understanding, co-operation, peace and human rights and to further international exchanges (Reich & Pivovarov 1994). The focus of ASP was not only human rights but the role of education in bridging gaps and mending the hostile relations between nations prior to and during WWII.

The first formal request to educate students about human rights was in UNESCO’s 1974 recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace, and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (UNESCO 1974), which UNESCO dedicated the 18th session of its general conference to. The 1974 UNESCO Recommendation happened when the remaining dictatorships in Europe were collapsing and military colonial occupations were coming to an end in most of the world. This movement towards de-colonisation, emancipation, democratisation and self-determination was reflected in Section III, article (6) of the recommendation:

‘Education should stress the inadmissibility of recourse to war for purposes of expansion, aggression and domination, or to the use of force and violence for purposes of repression… It should contribute to …the activities in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations, and against all forms and varieties of racialism, fascism, and apartheid as well as other ideologies which breed national and
racial hatred and which are contrary to the purposes of this recommendation’ (UNESCO 1974).

This is also reaffirmed in article (18):

‘Education should be directed both towards the eradication of conditions which perpetuate and aggravate major problems affecting human survival and well-being – inequality and injustice. [Additionally] education should be directed towards: (a) equality of rights of peoples, and the right of peoples to self-determination…(c) action to ensure the exercise and observance of human rights, including those of refugees; racialism and its eradication; the fight against discrimination in its various forms’

The 1974 UNESCO recommendation reaffirms the aims of education as stated in the UDHR, and states that it is a life-long process. It focuses on understanding and respect for all peoples, cultures, civilisations, values and ways of life. Additionally, the 1974 recommendation addresses pedagogy. Article (5) encourages critical thinking and understanding and article (12) encourages methods that appeal to the creative imagination and prepare learners to exercise their rights and freedoms. The 1974 recommendation framed human rights and education in new contexts and tackled emerging issues such as self-determination, corruption and power in addition to highlighting the relationship between socio-economic development and social justice.

In 1978, UNESCO organised the International Congress on Teaching Human Rights, which took place in Vienna. Here the aims of the 1974 recommendations were articulated and clarified and HRE was mentioned for the first time as a concept. It stated that HRE and teaching should aim at:

‘Fostering the attitudes of tolerance, respect and solidarity inherent in human rights; providing knowledge about human rights, in both their national and international dimensions, and the institutions established for their implementation; developing the individual's awareness of the ways and means by which human rights can be translated into social and political reality at both the national and the international levels’
The quote above highlights the idea of localising the global. As stated above, education about human rights should not be only about distant human rights formulated by global bodies, but should have national dimensions. To reaffirm this, the congress stated that human rights curricula should be adapted to national contexts, and that HRE should protect and promote the rights of marginalised groups like indigenous populations and the disabled, in their own language and according to their needs as identified by them.

When HRE is brought into the local context, and enables oppressed groups to struggle against oppression for emancipation, this is called HRE praxis. Praxis according to Freire is ‘reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed’ (Freire [1970]1993, p.126). HRE in this case is not only about knowing human rights but also about doing human rights.

Linking human rights and HRE to politics is inevitable; contemporary international law, including human rights, is a system created by states. History has shown that states tend to seek the enforcement of international laws and norms when it suits their interests (Munayyer 2015). States invoke human rights to ensure regulatory and ethical compliance even when waging wars (Khalili 2012). Hence, the ability to use human rights as a counter-hegemonic tool for righting injustices and obtaining emancipation and self-determination is not linear and can be problematised (Perugini & Gordon 2015). This will be discussed in detail in the case of Palestine under section (2.3).

The UNESCO congress of 1978 highlighted the ability of people to discuss human rights critically, an aspect not raised in previous UN documents. This takes human rights out of its sacred status to the status where it can be an evolving and changing concept. To this effect, the congress stated that

‘The concept of human rights should not be formulated in traditional or classical terms but should include the historical experiences and contributions of all people particularly in relation to the major contemporary problem of self determination and all forms of discrimination and exploitation’
The congress also stressed the indivisibility of rights and the importance of individual as well as collective rights; this was stated in its first guiding principle:

‘Equal emphasis should be placed on economic, social and cultural, civil and political rights as well as individual and collective rights. The indivisibility of all human rights should be recognised’

A term that was used in the 1978 congress but was not used in any other previous or following UN documents is the internationalisation of human rights.

Point (6) of the 1978 congress’s recommendations affirmed that:


It then continues under point (7):

‘Human rights curricula should be adapted to national and regional realities provided, however, that the universality of the instruments is acknowledged’

This term reflects the awareness at that time of the sensitivity of cultural diversity, the specificity of various cultures and the possible multiple adaptations of HRE in local and regional contexts. Internationalising human rights entails an inclusion of this diversity rather than an imposition of a universal value system that might be perceived as colonial, Western, foreign and/or hegemonic.

The 1974 UNESCO recommendation and the 1978 Congress were radical in their view of human rights and its role within education as connected to the struggles of people for their own emancipation, freedom and anti-colonialism. However, this vision was diluted in the following UN documents as will be discussed below. The vision of the 1974 UNESCO recommendations and the 1978 Congress will be used as a basis for the re-conceptualisation of HRE within the Palestinian context in section (2.3).
In 1987, UNESCO organised the International Congress on Human Rights Teaching, Information and Documentation which took place in Malta. There was no definition of HRE in the Malta congress, neither were the aims of education stated clearly, however, the recommendations were divided into a number of sections, six of them formed guidelines for HRE. These sections were: Content and programmes; forms, methods and teaching materials; teacher training and protection of teachers and other educators in the field of human rights education; research on human rights education; and International co-operation and the role of non-governmental organisations.

In terms of content, the 1987 congress reiterated the importance of bringing the global to the local. The importance of considering multi-ethnic and plural-cultural character of societies was highlighted, stressing the interrelationships between rights of peoples and human rights. As for pedagogy, it encouraged member states and NGOs to intensify their efforts to develop methods and materials for HRE that took into account both consensus and conflict on contemporary human rights issues, and present information on the reasons why human rights issues are understood differently according to different social and cultural contexts. In particular, it provided information on the mechanisms for setting standards in the UN system, as well as information on different political attitudes that the term human rights implies in various countries (UNESCO n.d).

Another important point that was raised in the 1987 Malta congress was the safety of HRE teachers and practitioners. Under point (4) the recommendations stressed the need to protect the individual who teaches human rights from discrimination, harassment, dismissal or other interference because of this teaching. This recommendation implied that HRE teachers are not mere civil servants, but are catalysts of change who have a wider role in relation to the protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights. Those involved in HRE are considered human rights defenders and activists who might be attacked for their actions and beliefs. Such an interpretation has implications for teachers in government schools who are required to follow a government devised curricula and manage or suppress dissent. This issue will be discussed in the case of the Occupied West Bank in chapters (5) and (6).
Dedicating a recommendation to the role of NGOs is an important development. While the Malta congress, as in the previous UN documents, stressed the primary role of governments to provide HRE, this was the first time that the role of NGOs was highlighted as such. However, the role of NGOs was still considered secondary to the work of UN bodies and governments. The Malta recommendation states that UNESCO should provide ‘necessary backing to strengthen the institutionalization of non-governmental organizations for non-formal and community education, especially to develop their work in pedagogical research, in the preparation of written and audiovisual materials for wide distribution, in exchanges of experience and their subsequent systematization’ (UNESCO n.d.). This reaffirms the view of governmental bodies that NGOs should not or cannot be independent players in the field of HRE, and their role as stated here is mainly in non-formal and community education rather than within schools.

The International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy was held in Montreal in 1993. The Montreal Congress corresponded to a new context that sought to mark the end of East-West confrontation and democratisation in different regions of the world. This created a chance for further protection and promotion of human rights and democratic values. However, threats such as racism, xenophobia and ethno-nationalism intensified. According to the report of the Montreal congress, these changes demonstrated a need for new approaches to HRE (Kutukdjian & Symonide1993).

A definition of HRE was not developed during the Montreal congress, however education for democracy as a complementary aspect to HRE was introduced. The discussions during the conference included an articulation between human rights and democracy and their relations to development, cultural diversity and tolerance. The Montreal conference adopted a World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy. Another significant aspect in the Montreal congress was the inclusion of education for human rights and democracy in specific contexts and difficult situations. These were: armed conflicts of either an international or non-international character, internal tension, unrest, uprisings and
states of emergency, periods of transition from dictatorship to democracy or threats to democracy, foreign occupation and natural disasters.
Following the end of the cold war, the UN convened the World Conference on Human Rights. This 1993 World conference took place in Vienna three months after the Montreal Congress. In the conference, HRE was discussed in detail and a section of the programme of action was dedicated to HRE. Point (I/33) of the programme of action reaffirmed that states are duty-bound, as stipulated by international human rights instruments to ensure that education is aimed at strengthening the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms. According to the World conference and the programme of action:

‘Education on human rights and the dissemination of proper information, both theoretical and practical, play an important role in the promotion and respect of human rights with regard to all individuals without distinction of any kind such as race, sex, language or religion, and this should be integrated in the education policies at the national as well as international levels’ (OHCHR 1993).

The World conference and programme of action still did not give a clear definition of HRE. Furthermore, the conference reaffirmed that the main duty-bearers of the process of introducing and enforcing HRE were governments, with the assistance of intergovernmental organisations, national institutions and non-governmental organisations.

The Vienna World conference marked a milestone in human rights lexicon, theory and activism (Baxi 1997). However, in terms of HRE it marked a regression from the advancements made during previous recommendations and congresses. The idea that governments have primary responsibility for raising awareness about human rights is problematic as it allows governments to claim incapacity, lack of resources or having other priorities. Dedicating the primary responsibility to governments sidelines NGOs and renders them in the periphery.

‘HRE is inherently revolutionary: If implemented effectively, it has the potential to generate social opposition, alongside rising demands for justice and accountability’ (Cardenas 2005). The process of integrating human rights into education requires decoupling or adaptation (Meyer & Rowan 2008) which can lead to HRE losing its activist-oriented edge, seen in isolation from the struggles that secured it (Meyer 2010 cited in Bajaj 2012). Governments tend to tame
people and impose their own political agenda which results in maintaining the status quo and silencing dissent. As mentioned above, governments may cite institutional inadequacies and a lack of resources as an excuse to deprioritise HRE, saying that they lack the human capacity needed to design, plan and implement it.

‘In the case of human rights, it is important to know of societies which have or had basic values other than human rights. It is also important to know of the struggles of human rights’ (Osler & Starkey 1996, p.85), overlooking and omitting the experiences of grassroots activists and practitioners in the field of HRE cements a UN top-down approach to HRE. Additionally, the Vienna conference and programme of action focused solely on the knowledge aspect of HRE, which neglected advancements made regarding pedagogy and linking HRE to people’s struggles in previous UNESCO recommendations and congresses, particularly the 1974 recommendations and the 1978 congress.

The UNGA, in its resolution 49/184 of 23 December 1994, proclaimed the 10-year period beginning on 1 January 1995 as the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education, and welcomed the Plan of Action for the Decade. A UN definition of HRE appeared for the first time in the plan of action document. HRE was defined as:

‘Training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the molding of attitudes which are 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 UN for the maintenance of peace’ (UNGA 1996).

The plan of action for the HRE decade (1995-2004) stressed the universality and the interdependence of all rights, and highlighted the importance of linking the universal to the particular, the abstract to the concrete and the global to the local (Baxi 1997). The general guiding principles point (II/ 6) affirmed that:
‘In order to enhance their effectiveness, human rights education efforts for the Decade shall be shaped in such a way as to be relevant to the daily lives of learners, and shall seek to engage learners in a dialogue about the ways and means of transforming human rights from the expression of abstract norms to the reality of their social, economic, cultural and political conditions’ (UNGA 1996).

The quote above is crucial as it stresses the importance of learners’ engagement and links HRE effectiveness with its relevance to learners’ daily realities.

The plan of action highlights the importance of the cooperation between governments and civil society as well as the equal participation of grassroots organisations, and individuals of all ages and backgrounds. However, the documents lists all UN agencies, governments, and national human rights institutions as principal actors, while national NGOs, grassroots organisations and individuals only assist in the realisation of the goals of the Decade. OHCHR and UNESCO were asked to conduct an evaluation of the plan of action’s implementation and provide continuous support for national focal points and initiatives. While concentrating power on the side of UN agencies might be benign, this allocation of responsibility to the OHCHR and UNESCO could contribute to the demise of the role of grassroots organisations and movements. For example, in Palestine, after the signing of the Oslo Accords, great amounts of aid money were poured into the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, a substantial portion of which came in the form of democracy, governance, and civil society programmes (Leone 2011). The aid money also came with commitments to international donors and technical assistance bodies such as UN agencies. Palestinian NGOs and grassroots movements ‘became reliant on aid money and influenced by the practices and discourse of international institutions, [and] consequently, divorced from grass-roots support and the nationalist project altogether’ (ibid, p.13). This is discussed in detail in chapter (5).

The UNGA proclaimed a second Decade for HRE that began on 1 January 2005. This decision was transformed to the World Programme for Human Rights Education (WPHRE) (2005-ongoing). The WPHRE seeks to promote a common understanding of the basic principles and methodologies of HRE, provide a concrete framework for action and strengthen partnerships from the international
level down to the grassroots. The WPHRE is divided into three consecutive phases. The first phase (2005-2009) focused on HRE in primary and secondary school systems. The second phase (2010-2014) focused on HRE for higher education and on human rights training programmes for teachers and educators, civil servants, law enforcement officials and military personnel. The third phase (2015-2019) focuses on strengthening the implementation of the first two phases and promoting human rights training for media professionals and journalists (OHCHR n.d.).

In the UNGA resolution proclaiming the WPHRE, HRE was not defined. However, the document states that:

‘Human rights education is essential to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms and contributes significantly to promoting equality, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation and democratic processes, with a view to developing societies in which all human beings are valued and respected, without discrimination or distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political, or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status’ (UNGA 2005b).

In terms of defining HRE, the three phases of the WPHRE state the same definition:

‘Human rights education is any learning, education, training and information efforts aimed at building a universal culture of human rights, including: (a) strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; (b) full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity; (c) promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and minorities; (d) enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law; (e) building and maintenance of peace; (f) promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice’ (UNGA 2005c).

According to the plans of action of the three phases, HRE encompasses:

‘(a) Knowledge and skills — learning about human rights and mechanisms, as well as acquiring skills to apply them in a practical way in daily life; (b) Values, attitudes and behaviour — developing values and reinforcing attitudes and behaviour which uphold human rights; (c) Action — taking action to defend and promote human rights’ (ibid).
While each phase focused on a different context and beneficiaries, the definition remained the same. Considering that each phase is implemented over a five year period, changes in political, social and cultural contexts and feedback from experience on the ground have not been reflected in the definition.

In 2006, the UNGA mandated the newly established Human Rights Council (HRC) to promote HRE and learning (UNGA 2006). From the outset, the HRC was directed to focus on increasing HRE, a role it has taken to with gusto (Gerber 2011). The HRC consequently set up an advisory committee to draft the UNDHRET, with wide stakeholder consultations in relation to the content and structure. While it took more than three and a half years to finalise the UNDHRET, NGOs were able to contribute to the drafting of the instrument (UNGA 2011b) which was adopted in December 2011 by the UNGA. However, the engagement of NGOs should be reviewed with criticality. This issue of NGO engagement is highlighted under section (2.2.2).

The Declaration reflects and reaffirms the definition of HRE within the WPHRE, stating that HRE provides persons with knowledge and skills to empower them to enjoy and exercise their rights, and respect and uphold the rights of others. It affirms that states, and relevant governmental authorities where applicable, have the primary responsibility to promote and ensure HRE and training, and that states should create a safe and enabling environment for the engagement of civil society and other relevant stakeholders in those processes (UNGA 2014). The declaration upholds the main developments that took place in relation to HRE in terms of its timeframe, as a life-long process, including democracy, international law, social justice and peace-related issues and that HRE should take different economic, social and cultural circumstances into account, promoting local initiatives to encourage ownership. It reaffirms the sole responsibility of states to deliver HRE.

While the UNDHRET states that HRE encompasses knowledge, skills, values and attitudes as well as action, as stated in the plans of actions of the three phases of the WPHRE, it reiterates them and adds the education *through* human rights aspect. Consequently, the declaration affirms that HRE includes:
‘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’. (UNGA 2012).

The UNDHRET is a global instrument that emphasises the importance of HRE. However, Gerber (2011) has summarised the weaknesses within UNDHRET as follows: first, the preamble of the UNDHRET excludes grounds of discrimination like sexual orientation, disability, nationality and age. Second, the word ‘training’ has been added with no explanation and has not previously featured in international instruments. According to Gerber (2011, p.247) ‘this is a deviation from the commonly used language with no attempt to articulate the distinction between training and education, it would have been helpful for the drafters to articulate the distinction between the terms and the background to the use of this language’. While, as Gerber argues, there was no attempt to highlight the distinction between training and education in any UN documents, it is important to note that the term training was in fact mentioned in the WPHRE definition of HRE (UNGA 2005c; UNGA 2010; UNGA 2014). The third UNDHRET weakness according to Gerber is that the declaration does not clearly unpack the normative content of HRE, nor provide a clear path for implementation. Finally, some of the language used is not helpful. For example the use of the word tolerance is questionable in human rights discourse as it has negative connotations and can be interpreted as putting up with something under sufferance, or enduring disagreeable circumstances (Gerber 2011). It would have been preferable to refer to promoting respect, rather than tolerance.

By and large, UN definitions mainly reflect the role of international norms for ensuring social cohesion and peace, and are directed at national policymakers; as such, they provide a top-down statement of what HRE is and should be (Flowers et al. 2000). Additionally, the UN definitions of HRE mainly list the aims of education within the framework of human rights rather than more nuanced definitions and conceptualisations of this universal concept. Nevertheless, the
developments that took place in the field of HRE through its proliferation and
diverse implementation cannot be denied, particularly on the international policy-
making levels. For example, HRE is in the top ten most-raised issues within the
However, while there are mechanisms to assess government commitment to
HRE, such as the UPR, the impact of UN mechanisms related to HRE on the
ground and on real change remains unclear.
2.2.1.2. Council of Europe

There are numerous resolutions and recommendations issued by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly at the CoE related to education in general and HRE in particular (OHCHR 2014). The most prominent documents of these are the Committee of Ministers Recommendation No. R (85/7) to Member States on Teaching and Learning about Human Rights in Schools (1985) and Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec (2010/7) on the CoE Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

The 1985 recommendation did not define HRE, however it stated in detail essential elements of HRE, namely: topics to be included in human rights teaching and learning (education about human rights), methods used, the school context in which human rights teaching and learning will take place (education through human rights), as well as the aim of human rights teaching and learning (education for human rights). Hence, the 1985 recommendation preceded the UN in identifying the three main elements: education about, through and for human rights, as they were clearly stated by the UN only in 1995.

Point (3.2) of the recommendation emphasises that teaching and learning about human rights should be positive to avoid the powerlessness and discouragement that pupils might feel from being exposed to information about human rights violations. This is exemplified by point (4.2) that states that schools should encourage students to participate in NGO work which can provide case studies and experiences of successful campaigning. It is essential to highlight the positive successes of human rights work on the ground and the change that it makes in people’s lives such as encouraging students to participate in NGO work. However, only focusing on positive human rights experiences neglects the daily life experiences mentioned in the UNESCO congress 1978 and the idea of linking HRE to students’ realities to be able to create change. The positive change caused by human rights work like campaigning, is a lengthy process. Most of this work might not lead to change or might not be effective and violations will proceed. Giving pupils only the positive side of the story might lead to cynicism and disillusion.
According to the 1985 recommendation, the anchor and the basis of HRE are international declarations and conventions. This was stressed on a number of occasions, while people’s experiences were mentioned once. According to the recommendation, the failures and successes of people’s struggles should be mentioned but the failures of international conventions were not aspects to be considered. Interestingly, unlike UN documents related to HRE, the CoE 1985 recommendation did not emphasise the role of the state as having sole responsibility for HRE. The recommendation stressed the role of the community, schools, parents, NGOs, students and teachers to plan and implement HRE in schools. It also states that all young people should learn about human rights as part of preparing for life in a pluralistic democracy. The link between human rights and democracy in UN mechanisms dealing with HRE did not appear until 1993 during the Montreal congress.

The CoE Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (2010) definition is similar to the UN world programme definition and similarly can be categorised into education about, through and for human rights. Interestingly, the CoE charter has a separate definition for education on democratic citizenship. According to the charter ‘Education for democratic citizenship focuses primarily on democratic rights and responsibilities and active participation, in relation to the civic, political, social, economic, legal and cultural spheres of society, while human rights education is concerned with the broader spectrum of human rights and fundamental freedoms in every aspect of people’s lives’. This divide cements the division between civic and political rights on one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other.

2.2.1.3. League of Arab States

Literature shows that minimal effort has been made in relation to HRE on the LAS level. According to (Flowers 2015) this is due to the contradiction between human rights law and Sharia law. Here Flowers has overlooked factors other than religion such as socio-political and cultural contexts. Additionally, not all countries in the MENA region follow Sharia law, for example Lebanon and Tunisia are secular states. Flowers (2015) also said that HRE in most Muslim countries has
had little implementation, especially with the contemporary rise of fundamentalism. It is important to note that while the majority of HRE programmes and curricula maintain that Islamic values are superior to universal human rights values (as discussed in chapter (5)), this does not mean that HRE programmes do not exist in Arab and/or Muslim countries. There are numerous examples of countries in the MENA region such as Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia who have active and nationwide HRE programmes. Palestine for instance, as shown in this research, mainstreamed human rights in its governmental and UNRWA schools in addition to several HRE projects implemented by national and international organisations in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. While the role of governments in the MENA region might be minimal in relation to supporting HRE efforts, NGOs in the region play a significant role to mend the gap. This will be discussed in section (2.2.2).

The LAS issued three documents related to HRE: the Arab Charter on Human Rights in 2004, the Arab Plan for HRE (2009-2014) and the Arab plan to foster the culture of human rights (2010). The Arab Charter in point (4) article (41) states that ‘state parties shall guarantee to provide education directed to the full development of the human person and to strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms’ (LAS Council 2004). The Arab Plan for HRE (2009-2014) stressed the importance of enacting the World Programme on HRE in the Arab world. According to the Arab Plan, HRE is defined as:

‘A long term, life-long, continuous process that aims mainly to enhance values of tolerance, solidarity and cooperation between people that will create an environment where the world will be a better place for people to live in, where freedom, justice, dignity, equality, prevention of conflicts and human rights violations as well as democracy prevail. HRE aims to create societies where everyone is appreciated and respected’ (LAS Council 2007).

The definition of the Arab plan includes all elements stated in the UN definitions. Interestingly it does not highlight cultural relativism or the importance of the three monotheistic religions as the basis of education values. However, they are stated several times in the text of the plan as caveats to universal HRE and challenges to implementation. In 2010, in order to enact the Arab Plan for HRE, Morocco called for the adoption of an Arab plan to foster the culture of human rights. This
new plan was based on previous LAS documents, but was devised closely with
the OHCHR to comply with the guidelines of the WPHRE. In this new plan, the
issue of Islam was highlighted. Under general principles in the plan it stated: ‘the
tolerant message of Islam, the values on which the revealed religions are based
and the values of Arab civilization’ (OHCHR 2010). The sentence is vague and
not explained anywhere in the LAS document or in country specific plans on
HRE. The values of Islam, and the superiority of these values as perceived by
Arab governments and demonstrated by school curricula, particularly in civics
education and HRE in the case of Palestine, will be discussed in chapters (5) and
(6).

2.2.2. Definitions by Non-Governmental Organisations

The role of NGOs in relation to HRE is highlighted in UN and regional documents,
however this role is periphery rather than core. Literature shows that HRE was
identified and defined by NGOs well before UN and regional instruments. For
example, in the United States in 1969 the national council for social studies
issued a guide to human rights education which linked HRE to action. Empirically,
the work of NGOs on the impact of HRE proved to be vital for the development,
promotion and implementation of HRE. NGO work tends to be transformative, to
empower vulnerable groups and enable them to claim rights and challenge
oppression. Whereas the focus of governments and inter-governmental bodies is
preservative (Flowers 2003). This focus is exemplified by the way NGOs define
HRE. For example, Amnesty International defined HRE in 1987 as:

‘Education should also include teaching people how to defend
their rights. If human rights awareness is successfully instilled
into a society, this can help to prevent violations. HRE is
therefore a useful shield from human rights abuse’

However, HRE lacks a unified definition and an agreed theoretical basis. Not
knowing precisely what HRE is does not condemn the field to a fatal vagueness
(Flowers 2003). This fluidity reflects the fact that HRE is adaptable to various
contexts. NGO definitions of HRE contribute to giving meaning and clarity to
otherwise rigid text and shape HRE praxis. Norms cannot be effective unless they
are unpacked into clear components, spelling out obligations and rights, and
identifying the path to their implementation at the national level (Mutua
2007,p.618).
‘[HRE]... is a process of learning that evokes critical thinking and systemic analysis, with a gender perspective, with the learners...-- women and men learning to analyze their situations within a holistic framework of human rights about political, civil, economic, social and cultural concern relevant to the learners lives...-- to result in a sense of ownership of human rights...-- leading to equal participation in the decisions that determine our lives and taking actions to claim them’ (Koenig 2002 cited in Flowers 2003)

HRE is evident in the work of grassroots NGOs working in contexts of revolutions and struggle against foreign occupations. This aspect is rarely mentioned in UN or regional documents, aside from the 1974 recommendations and 1978 congress. One example of how HRE is perceived by NGOs working in a revolutionary context is from the Philippines, reflecting the country’s revolution in the 1980s:

‘... What is thus needed is to raise the victims’ and the probable victims’ consciousness to enable them to critically examine whatever is mediated to them as the natural way of interpreting their world of experience. It is when the powerless are given the opportunity to reflect on their own thoughts and when their objective condition becomes the content of their study that they are able to liberate their thoughts from undue influence of the ruling power. ...This is every human rights educator’s formidable task’ (Amnesty International – Philippines Section 1994)

The two definitions above also highlight their link to critical consciousness or conscientizacao; learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against oppression (Freire [1970] 1993). The importance of this concept within HRE praxis will be discussed in detail in section 2.3.

In spite of the positive role of NGOs in relation to HRE, it is important to apply a critical lens to their work. NGOs that are tied to government support or donor funding might be tied into politicised agendas. Hence, HRE might be appropriated to fit these agendas. HRE, like human rights, is used as a tool to advance political goals; ‘[it] becomes an organic part of a social and political text, and not only a pretext for a hidden objective... Human rights, [and consequently HRE], can be used to develop a legal and moral framework in which historical events and political objectives are given a specific meaning. In this way, human rights help
produce a certain narration of history, which simultaneously confers a specific political meaning on human rights. They constitute a highly flexible political discourse with the capacity to be constantly translated, performed, and re-tooled in different political arenas’ (Perugini & Gordon 2015, p.12).

An example of how NGOs’ transformative and radical discourse can be watered down when reflected in governmental and inter-governmental text is the participation of NGOs in drafting the UNDHRET. NGOs’ praxis was not reflected in the new text which did not differ substantially from the WPHRE. Additionally, states have the main responsibility to provide HRE and civil society organisations have a supportive role. Article (10/2) exemplifies this point:

‘Civil society institutions, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders are encouraged to ensure adequate human rights education and training for their staff and personnel’.

The word encouraged in article (10) above implies optionality rather than necessity.

2.2.3. Definitions within Academia

Academics working in and on HRE are usually closely associated with practitioners or they are practitioners themselves; hence, HRE theory is also closely associated with HRE praxis. With the proliferation of HRE, academics and practitioners alike have recognised the rise in educational strategies as part of larger human rights efforts as well an independent field of scholarship and practice (Mihr & Schmitz 2007). ‘The field of practice of HRE is unified by the aim of using education to promote and defend human rights in the broader society, but differs markedly in relation to the understandings of human rights underpinning them and in the strategies adopted to achieve them’ (McCowan 2013. P.158). As argued in the section above, there appears to be a diversity of perspectives on what exactly HRE is, means, and does (Bajaj 2012). Moving beyond generating a definition for HRE, academics focus on aspects such as the contextualisation of HRE, methods of problematising its implementation methods, and using empirical research in different political, cultural and socio-economic contexts to examine HRE’s applicability, adaptability and acceptability. They
examine its interdisciplinarity and ability to be integrated within other types of values or moral education such as education for democratic citizenship which can be considered as vehicles for HRE (Osler and Starkey 2010).

The literature reveals a number of attempts of classify HRE. HRE can be distinguishable by its knowledge base, goals, outcome and processes (Waldron 2010). HRE can be charactarised as education in, for and through human rights (Heater 1984). It can also be framed based on its providers – government bodies, NGOs, practitionerers and so on. Another way to categorise HRE is by looking at how it is implemented: formal, non-formal and/or informal. HRE can also be categorised based on the age, academic, professional, economic, social and/or political backgrounds of the beneficiaries. According to Osler & Sta rkey (1996), HRE can be considered within a triangle based on thinking, feeling and doing. This is ‘based on the premise that learning occurs best where there is a combination of the cognitive, the affective and the active’ (Osler & Starkey 1996, p. 85).

These different categories imply the extent to which HRE can be seen as education for transformation and social action or HRE for more conservative goals (Waldron 2010). Identifying the category of HRE and its aim determines the type of pedagogy and engagement model. For example, a transformational model of HRE requires deep engagement, and pedagogical approaches that facilitate self-reflection and collaborative learning (Tibbitts 2002).

According to Bajaj (2012, p. 489) the ideological orientations of most HRE initiatives are generally rooted in one of three categories: (1) HRE for Global Citizenship that seeks to provide learners with membership to an international community through fostering knowledge and skills related to universal values and standards; (2) HRE for coexistence which focuses on the inter-personal and inter-group aspects of rights and is usually a strategy utilised where conflict emerges not from absolute deprivation, but from ethnic or civil strife; or (3) HRE for Transformative Action usually involving learners who are marginalised from economic and political power and for whom HRE includes a significant process of understanding their own realities.
Some academics adopt a cross-sectoral approach to identify different typologies of HRE. For example, Flowers (2004) links the model of HRE to the intended outcomes of the provider. She identifies three types of providers, namely: governmental bodies (including UN agencies), NGOs, and academic institutions. These three providers are distinguishable based on their intended outcomes. While government bodies prioritise knowledge-based HRE, raising awareness about international human rights standards, maintaining peace, tolerance and order rather than social change and transformation; NGOs, particularly grassroots bodies see HRE as a tool for social change; working towards individual and collective empowerment (ibid). At a grassroots level, HRE often takes the form of popular or community education to mobilise constituencies for expanding social movements (Kapoor 2004). This raises the importance of the context in which HRE is implemented. For example in countries that experience dictatorships, once the dictatorship has ended, education is used as a tool for reconciliation and the prevention of a return to authoritarian rule (Magendzo 1997). In these contexts, HRE is both a political and pedagogical strategy to facilitate democratisation and active citizenship (Bajaj 2012). The social and political contexts also determine the content of HRE. For example in post-conflict or post-colonial countries the focus tends to be on the rule of law. In places where repressive political structures prevail and there are high levels of discrimination, HRE focuses on empowerment and resistance (Tibbitts 2008). McCowan (2013, p.154) argues that there is ‘widespread evidence of ‘decoupling’, where the content [of HRE] is sanitized so as not to prove too challenging to existing power structures or pushed to the periphery of school experience’. Hence, HRE will be focused on resistance when provided by grassroots bodies or activists, not when provided by governmental bodies including UN agencies as argued in sections (2.2.1) and (2.2.2). Ideology is another aspect that needs to be considered when examining HRE. People’s beliefs and values give HRE its different forms and pedagogies. In societies where Islam is the dominant religion, human rights are presented through HRE with an Islamic perspective where Islam is the superior value system rather than universal human rights. This issue will be discussed in detail in chapters (5) and (6).
Academics perceive HRE as an ethical framework for universal application. While their analyses and formulations are careful to stress that human rights principles must be understood, integrated, and expressed by the learners without coercion, Flowers (2003) argues that some thinkers working in and on HRE regard human rights as a self-evident value system, rarely questioning its theoretical basis. Critical academics like Baxi stress the need to consider human rights as a value system that emerged from below, rendering HRE a truly transformative and genuine tool for change.

_Human rights cultures have long been in the making by the praxis of victims of violations, regardless of the mode of formulation of human rights standards and instruments. The single most critical source of human rights is the consciousness of peoples of the world who have waged the most persistent struggles for decolonization and self-determination, against racial discrimination, gender-based aggression and discrimination, denial of access to basic minimum needs, environmental degradation and destruction.... Clearly, Human Rights Education (HRE) must begin by a commissioning of a world history of people's struggles for rights and against injustice and tyranny (Baxi, 1997, p.142)._

In the sections below, I explain how international law is crippled in Palestine due to the lack of political will and inconsistent implementation. I then use various examples to exemplify how Palestinians used human rights in their struggle and how that can be linked to HRE, where HRE contributes to human rights praxis and counter its appropriation.

2.3. HRE Re-Conceptualised: The Case of Occupied Palestine

There is no universal definition of the concept of indigenous peoples, but there are a number of criteria by which indigenous peoples can be identified. Palestinians meet these criteria.

‘Indigenous [...] peoples [...] are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in
accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system’ UN (2004).

Additionally, as most indigenous peoples, Palestinians, have experienced, and continue to experience, removal from lands and territories, subjugation, destruction of their cultures, discrimination and widespread violations of their human rights (APF & OHCHR 2013). Under this definition, Palestinians have the right to self determination (UNGA 2007b) as well as the right to struggle against the colonial occupation (UNGA 1974). However, contrary to countless UN resolutions enshrining Palestinians’ right to self-determination (Buttu 2015), Palestinians have been living under colonial occupation and enduring an enforced diaspora for over six decades. The international community has proved impotent in the face of colonial occupation that extends and expands illegal settlements in the Occupied West Bank, launching numerous assaults against the Gaza Strip and tightening its siege against its people. Palestinian refugees face existential crises, and the intensification of the delegitimisation and marginalisation of Palestinians living within the 1948 border, known as the Green Line. Additionally, Palestinians today are more isolated and fragmented than at any point since their initial dispossession and dispersal in 1948. Rabbani (2015) argues that Palestinian leaders are reduced to illegitimate and widely reviled appendages of Israel’s colonial project. This reality represents a challenge to the application of international law in Occupied Palestine and turns human rights into a punctured narrative, with questionable legitimacy and limited applicability. Nevertheless, Palestinians, in spite of their cynicism, have mainstreamed human rights within their struggle for liberation and self-determination.

2.3.1. Human Rights in the Palestinian Context: Appropriation and Praxis

Palestinians, as stateless people, have had little opportunity to participate in the state-centered processes of human rights norm setting, treaty drafting, enforcement, and so on. This has been exacerbated by the international community’s failure or inability to enforce international laws to protect Palestinians’ rights (Hajjar 2001). Furthermore, the fact that Palestinians continue to struggle against colonial occupation and have never reached a postcolonial status, which human rights laws tend to assume, confound the application of a human rights approach. This context illuminates a fundamental paradox of
international law (ibid).

The oppression of Palestinians for more than six decades has been facilitated and cemented by the appropriation of the human rights regime recalling that the problem of Israel/Palestine is to a significant degree the UN’s doing (Falk 2014). The Holocaust against the Jews triggered the development of the contemporary human rights regime. This human rights regime ensured reparations for Jews, victims of the Holocaust, by instating a colonial settler entity in Palestine. The colonial practices of the new entity generated new human rights violations (Perugini & Gordon 2015). 1948, a year that marks the UDHR, also marks the start of Israel’s state-building process leading to the destruction of hundreds of Palestinian villages, the systematic expulsion of the indigenous population, and the settlement of hundreds of thousands of [immigrant] Jews in their stead (Pappe 2006; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007).

The rights of Palestinians are denied and violated continuously by the Israeli colonial occupation, such as their right to freedom of movement, right to education, liberty of person and even their right to life (Francis 2011). These violations are continuously condemned by Palestinian, international and even Israeli human rights organisations. Yet the violations continue and, arguably, have become more egregious, with no accountability to the victims and no repercussions for Israel. This bleak reality is a manifestation of the shortcomings of international law particularly in the case of Occupied Palestine. This has not deterred Palestinians, on both the institutional and grassroots level, from deploying human rights as a tool of struggle against their oppressor.

Since the early 1970s, politically motivated Palestinian lawyers across historic Palestine have based their activism on human rights discourse. They focused their work on the right to self-determination, which is prominently enshrined in numerous international laws and conventions (Hajjar 2001). The increasing references to international law to challenge the legality of Israeli rule in the OPT provided the departure point for what would eventually develop into a Palestinian human rights movement. Also, throughout the years of Occupation, human rights
were popularised at the local level through the activities associated with doing human rights (ibid), which can also be referred to as human rights praxis.

Starting from the 1970s, ‘Palestinians adopted the language of human rights and used it to justify their resistance and critique Israel’s military rule’ (Perugini & Gordon 2015, p.38). At that point, human rights were progressively adopted as the language spearheading the struggle for self-determination (Hanafi & Tabar 2005). On the ground, the first Intifada was taking place where resistance was informed by peaceful anticolonial actions such as demonstrations, strikes and boycotting Israeli goods (Perugini & Gordon 2015). The diffusion of human rights discourse [and praxis] helped to reframe the Palestinian question; Israeli violations were systematically framed as human rights violations and Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip gained access to the ‘circle of victims’ of human rights violations. This led to an incremental shift in international public opinion towards the plight of Palestinians, among activists as well as a wider segment of civil society (ibid, p.40).

With the heightening of the first Intifada in the late 1980s, human rights language and praxis were adopted to create political change. Palestinians used human rights not only to criticise the political situation, but also to formulate ideas about how things should be. The popularisation of ‘human rights consciousness’ was apparent in the ways Palestinians expressed their political demands and aspirations for peace’ (Hajjar 2001, p.27). This was also clear on the institutional level. The Palestinian National Council (PNA) Declaration of Independence of 1988 called on the American people to:

‘Strive to put an end to the American policy that denies the Palestinian people’s national rights, including their sacred right to self-determination, and urging them to work toward the adoption of policies that conform to the Declaration of Human Rights and the international conventions and resolutions and serve the quest for peace in the Middle East and security for all its peoples, including the Palestinian people’ (PNA 1998).

It also affirmed that

‘The State of Palestine declares its commitment to the principles and objectives of the United Nations, and to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to the principles and policy of non-alignment’ (ibid).
Following the signing of the Oslo Accords and the creation of the PA in 1993/1994 human rights were institutionalised and professionalised. They became contained within the work of the ever increasing human rights organisations (HROs) and other NGOs that depend on foreign funding for their survival. NGOs’ eligibility for foreign funding often required them to adopt an approach that is less overtly political-national (Hammami et al. 2001). This contributed to public skepticism about the appropriateness and efficacy of human rights and increased the belief that human rights are “Western”. ‘One of the most powerful tropes in Palestinian national discourse is that Palestinians have been wronged by ‘the West’ in general, which diminishes the credibility of human rights’ as a whole (Hajjar 2001, p.30). In addition to this, the perceived detachment from grassroots needs and demands and the PA’s attempt to undermine HROs through for example describing them as a ‘bunch of thieves, fat cats, and foreign agents’ (Hammami 2000, p.18) further hindered their credibility.

The PA itself, which relies on foreign funding for its survival, adopted a human rights-based approach to end the Occupation and obtain statehood. In 2014, the PA joined 15 international human rights conventions (UN News Centre 2014) and a year after become a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Erakat 2015). However, the PA is losing its legitimacy due to its failure to end the Occupation and provide adequate services, in addition to its security coordination with the Occupation, an act that is perceived by Palestinians as treason. The PA is essentially an authoritarian body; Hajjar (2001, p.9) describes the PA as ‘autonomous authoritarianism’. The PA’s use of the language of human rights, considering the PA’s lack of legitimacy, contributes to the further delegitimisation of human rights amongst Palestinians.

In spite of the above, Palestinians continue to deploy human rights as a basis for their struggle. In 2005, Palestinian civil society issued a call for a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights. The BDS describes itself as a global movement against Israeli Apartheid, shaped by a rights-based approach and highlighting Palestinian refugees, those under Occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and Palestinians in Israel. The three demands of the BDS are: for
Israel to end its occupation and colonisation of all Arab lands occupied in June 1967 and to dismantle the Wall; to recognise the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and enable Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194 (BDS 2005). These three demands are grounded in international law and are sought through non-violent means. The BDS campaign has clear parallels with the struggle against apartheid South Africa where international sanctions played a key role in bringing the apartheid regime to an end, at least politically.

The BDS movement also succeeded in framing the struggle of Palestinians within the human rights discourse as well discourses of antiracist, anticolonial and antiapartheid movements. This gave the movement legitimacy among the Palestinian population and wide support globally as it resonates with other ongoing global struggles. The BDS movement exemplifies how Palestinians broadened human rights beyond their legalistic interpretations and professional culture, making them more aligned to grassroots social movements (Perugini & Gordon 2015). BDS activists managed to re-appropriate human rights through praxis, taking actions to dismantle oppressive structures. ‘Different histories and experiences of dispossession have taught us that demands for the reform and correction of institutionalised oppressive regimes end up reorganising domination instead of dissolving it’ (ibid, p.137). Hence, ‘Human rights [and human rights praxis] must remain subversive to be effective and legitimate’ (Vincent 1986, p.102).

In the next section, I argue that HRE is a site of struggle (Osler 2015) within the Palestinian context, with the Occupied West Bank as the geographical focus of my research. HRE in the Occupied West Bank has the potential to play a critical role in dismantling structures of oppression, not only the colonial occupation and despotic regime, but also patriarchal and oppressive beliefs and practices.
2.3.2. Human Rights Education Re-conceptualised: My New Definition

HRE is a rapidly evolving field, its theoretical basis are continuously questioned and unpicked and in practice it is constantly progressing. The plethora of work related to HRE, particularly its meaning, aims and applicability, either envisioned by institutions, activists or academics affirm the fact that there is no one constant agreed perspective on what exactly HRE is or what it does. HRE attempts to distinguish itself on the basis of its potential to empower and transform. Yet HRE can be appropriated to serve agendas far from this grassroots vision of transformation. In Palestine, it is limited by political factors that are predominantly external and work against the will of the people. The main hindering factors that work against meaningful HRE for change are: the adoption of a decontextualised HRE global model, the Occupation, imposed external politics reflected through donors’ politicised agenda, and PA policies. These points are discussed in detail in chapter (5).

In the Occupied West Bank, HRE occurs within the PA school system that is highly centralised, bureaucratic, with a strict hierarchal basis that resembles and reproduces patriarchal roles in society. Moughrabi (2004) argues that the real purpose of education in PA schools is to domesticate and control and therefore create subjects and not citizens. Additionally, since the PA is complicit with the colonial occupation and reliant on politicised donors’ agendas, the education system it controls, and particularly HRE, is sheltered in generalities, and confined within the limitations of cultural, social and religious dominant values. I also explore this argument in chapter (5). Hence, within a complex, multi-layered and challenging context, such as the context of the Occupied West Bank, it is imperative to try and better understand HRE, what it means, its aims, its basis and how it should be shaped, in addition to identifying the main stakeholders who set the meaning, objectives, plans and implementation of any HRE initiatives. In a context of uncertainty, political upheaval and socio-economic despair HRE should be constantly conceptualised, its implementation monitored, evaluated and changed according to the rapidly evolving needs and circumstances.
In the Occupied West Bank where the role of the PA and its institutions are weakened, unsustainable and untrusted by the Palestinian people, it is essential to consider alternative forms of HRE that allow for its development, ability to evolve, be relevant and move from the boundaries of institutionalised, rigid, top-down practice to an HRE that is meaningful, engaging and rooted within a change oriented praxis. HRE should not be restricted and limited within school curricula and inside school walls, but it should penetrate public spaces to be meaningful, inclusive and transformative.

Based on the critical engagement with the literature, particularly the various definitions of HRE, and my understanding of the context in the Occupied West Bank, I propose the following definition of HRE:

‘An ongoing process built on universal human rights standards and rooted in the praxis of people struggling for their rights, aiming to raise consciousness, dismantle structures of domination and oppression and build a space where subalterns have the opportunity and ability to make meaningful change to their lives’.

This definition is an aspiration, it is far from the reality of the mainstream HRE. I attempt to take HRE out of the process of appropriation to the realm of re-appropriation by the subalterns and praxis for bottom-up and positive change. Keeping the context of the Occupied West Bank in mind, I conceptualised this definition based on my critical engagement with and Problematisation of the various definitions available in UN documents, devised by regional bodies such as the CoE and the LAS as well as those created and generated based on the work of academics. I also identify elements within the definitions generated by these different stakeholders to feed into my new conceptualisation of the meaning and aims of HRE. Here it is essential to highlight that my HRE definition is inspired by the UNESCO (1974) Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms that stresses the idea that ‘education should contribute to the activities in the struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism in all their forms and manifestations, and all forms of racialism, fascism, and apartheid’; the work of Semali & Kincheloe (1999) and Denzин et al (2008) which stress the importance of peoples’ experiences of resistance against
oppression and struggles for freedom and emancipation, as well as Baxi’s (1997) notion that HRE ‘must begin by a commissioning of a world history of people’s struggles for rights and against injustice and tyranny’. Additionally, and most importantly, this conceptualisation is inspired by my conversations with my research participants in the Occupied West Bank, who through their struggle they transform the rigid legalised texts to actions on the ground that aim to defy the structures of oppression.

This new conceptualisation of HRE differs from the definitions listed in this chapter in a number of ways: first, it differs from the institutionalised definitions, particularly those of the UN and other regional bodies that it does not rely on the government as the primary provider of HRE; second it combines the transformative views of HRE highlighting the importance of the ongoing struggle and the dismantling of the structures of oppression rather than taking these structures as a constant factor that we should adhere to and merely try to better; finally, it stresses the primary role of those who struggle for their rights, the subalterns, the indigenous people who are marginalised and sidelined, bringing their aspirations, needs, knowledge and actions to the forefront.

The two terms struggle and subalterns are key in my new definition of HRE particularly to the Palestinian context. Struggle is the status quo for Palestinians as they struggle on daily basis for their rights and against violations committed by the Occupation and the PA. Framing HRE within the context of struggle brings it closer to the daily actions of defiance. In terms of the term subalterns, highlighting this term brings to the forefront the importance of local knowledge produced on the grass-roots level, it opens the discussion and poses the question ‘whose knowledge is the most worth?’ and whose perspective, experience and history are privileged (Apple & Buras 2006) within the frameworks of human rights and education. These questions are of an utmost important in the Palestinian context where its not only the Occupation, the donors, the political elite who control the narrative but also those Palestinians who economically and socially benefit from the presence of these structures of oppression, rendering the collective voice of the subalterns marginalised in a context where the real struggle for change stems from their action and activism.
To operationalise this new conceptualisation and test the remits of it, three elements: prevention, protection and taking action are to be considered. Where Prevention does not mean inaction. Prevention is when HRE provides knowledge and tools that enable people to identify and struggle against the root causes of violations rather than the symptoms. Protection is when HRE enables people to build a human rights culture where violations are not normalised, accepted or tolerated and where there is space for critical engagement with various socio-political conditions without marginalisation and/or alienation. Taking action is the struggle against violations and those who commit them, through re-appropriating the human rights discourse and rooting it in experiences of just struggles that took place and are taking place around the world. These three elements will be explored in chapter (7). Prevention and protection are linked to the first part of the new definition: ‘Building on universal human rights standards and rooted in the praxis of people struggling for their rights, aiming to raise consciousness’ and taking action falls under the second part of the new definition: ‘dismantling structures of domination and oppression and building a space where subalterns have the opportunity and ability to make meaningful change to their lives’. The operationalisation of my aspiration to this type of HRE is highlighted in chapter (8).

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed the development of HRE on global, regional and local levels. I traced the development of the definitions of HRE and identified gaps and shortcomings in these definitions. This delineated the conceptual boundaries for this thesis, focusing on how HRE should be rooted in and inspired by people’s struggles. Based on this standpoint and the critical review of the literature, I suggest a new definition for HRE that better fits the socio-political and cultural conditions in Occupied Palestine, particularly the Occupied West Bank. Additionally, I propose three main elements that could frame and lead HRE praxis in Occupied Palestine, namely: prevention, protection and taking action. These three key concepts link to my analysis in chapter (7) where I illuminate tensions in the current implementation of HRE in the Occupied West Bank where my field research took place.
In Chapter (3), in light of the complexities of the Palestinian context, I explain the methodological framework of my research and why critical constructivism is best suited to be the underpinning paradigm of this research. Additionally, I discuss the issue of decolonising research on Palestine. This issue is included to highlight the uniqueness of research in Palestine and with Palestinians, particularly when the research is linked to human rights.
Chapter (3)
Methodology

‘Theory is linked to methods, and methods to the scenes studied, grounding one’s work. The methods rely heavily on direct observation, open-ended interviewing, and textual analysis of human products. However, the degree and extent of utilization of each of these methods depend on the researcher’s purposes, the guiding questions, theoretical framework, and the scene itself.’ (Noblit, Flores & Murillo 2004, p.157)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological framework of the research. The chapter links my ontological and epistemological stances to critical constructivism which is the underpinning paradigm of this research. Additionally, I include a section on decolonising research on Palestine. This section is added to highlight the uniqueness of research in Palestine and with Palestinians and links directly to my ontological stance and my positionality as a researcher, which is explained in more detail in chapter (4).

The chapter is divided into nine main sections. Section (3.2) is my personal motivation and ontology stemming from factors and influences that shape my understanding of the world. How I perceive knowledge about and understanding of Palestine, its politics, culture and society. This section is followed and linked to section (3.3) which situates the research under the umbrella of critical theory. Critical theory allows for the consideration of my understanding, positioning as a researcher and engagement with the social, cultural and political reality of and in Palestine. Under this umbrella, the study is situated within the critical constructivism paradigm, which is the epistemological stance of this research. In sections (3.4) and (3.5) I explain the relation between constructivism and critical constructivism, justifying my selection of critical constructivism as my epistemological stance and the paradigm that underpins this research. Sections (3.6) and (3.7) clarify the linkages between critical constructivism, education and human rights in general and HRE in particular. In section (3.8) the reasoning behind the selection of critical ethnographic methods is set out and discussed, in addition to the links between critical ethnography and both fields of human rights and education. Section (3.9) deals with the issue of reflexivity, aiming to show the
relation and balance between my position as a researcher and my intimate relation with Palestine, not only as a Palestinian but also as a human rights and political activist searching for justice. From reflexivity on the personal level as a researcher, I move to section (3.10) where I reflect on doing research on Palestine and with Palestinians. In this section I discuss the importance of decolonising research on Palestine as a concept and in practice, stating the methods I used and the challenges faced. Finally, in section (3.11) I draw conclusions based on the discussion of the main aspects in this chapter.

3.2. Personal motivation and ontology: the ‘I’ in Palest’l’ne

‘Until death takes me away, my only dream is to go back to my village, sit under an orange tree in my home and gaze towards the sunset over the olive groves… My home was taken away from me and my children’. Fatimah Jalamneh3 (Muheisen 2014)

Regardless of what our choices in life are, being a Palestinian leaves one with no choice. We carry memories, scars of war, the longing of those in the diaspora, and the guilt and pains of a lost…a stolen land. Even for those who choose not to be engaged in the struggle or resistance against the Occupation, they do not seem to be able to detach. Every Palestinian is like the ‘I’ in the middle of Palestine.

Up until the moment I found the ‘I’ in Palestine and determined my role as a Palestinian and a human rights activist, I always found myself in the words of Edward Said: ‘There was always something wrong with how I was invented and meant to fit in with the world…The overriding sensation I had was of always being out of place’ (Said 2000, p.3).

Just like Fatimah, living in the diaspora, although I lived in Palestine for many years, I envisioned a Palestine far from reality. Fatimah’s reality, just like mine, was determined by a particular illegitimate, dominating and repressive factor; the Israeli colonial occupation. I felt the ‘I’ in Palestine and decided to claim my role in the resistance against the Occupation. I decided to take part in the struggle for

---

3 An 85 year old great-grandmother, forcibly expelled in 1948 from the village of Noures near what is now the Israeli town of Afula. She is now a refugee living in Jenin refugee camp in the Occupied West Bank (Muheisen 2014)
justice and I chose research, human rights and education as my weapons. Having felt that, I embraced the fact that I will always be an inbetweener, between cultures and countries, but will never consider myself out of place as I have found my path.

Before my field research, I seemed to have forgotten all the social and political problems within the Palestinian society, I disregarded the social violence, poverty, oppression and all the other issues that any other society has, but which are magnified by the deformities caused by the brutality of the Israeli colonial occupation, which Palestinians have been living under for more than 67 years. I seem to have forgotten Mahmoud Darwish’s words: *How much we lied when we said: we are the exception!* (Darwish 2007).

Spending five months in the field conducting detailed interviews and observing not only classrooms, but behaviours, habits and a culture that seemed foreign to me even though I am the daughter of that culture, made me see Palestine differently. The field research made me realise that being away for a long time brought back memories of my childhood where Palestine was for me a happy place, a sanctuary and the place of Awda (return). However, seeing all the injustice and violence that we inflict on each other, using political oppression, patriarchy, tribal domination, abusive cultural and religious behaviour, disturbed me and upset me deeply. I felt withdrawal, detachment and dis-belonging.

However, just as the words of Edward Said affected me, the words of Anzaldúa grounded my work in the search of justice and the aspiration for positive change, regardless of my positioning within my own community, being an outsider or an insider. Anzaldúa (1981) said:

‘We are the queer group, the people that don’t belong anywhere, not in dominant world nor completely within our own respective cultures. Combined we cover so many oppressions. But the overwhelming oppression is the collective fact we do not fit, and because we do not fit we are a threat. Not all of us have the same oppressions, but we empathize and identify with each other’s oppressions. We do not have the same ideology, nor do we derive similar solutions. Some of us are leftists, some of us practitioners of magic. Some of us are both. But these different affinities are not opposed to each other. In El Mundo Zurdo [The Left-Handed World] I with my own affinities and my people with
Reflecting on these feelings after completing the field research, I realised that this is an opportunity; this is why I am conducting this research, to help make change, along with many Palestinians and non-Palestinians who are supporters of the cause, inside Occupied Palestine or outside, those who struggle for justice and positive social change.

‘Just why would one even bother to do research were it not for some wider concern or value?’ (Plummer 2005, p.361). My concern for Palestine and the future of Palestinians, the values of human rights and justice that I carry motivated me to complete this research. I believe that HRE which is fundamental for addressing the underlying causes of human rights violations, preventing human rights abuses, combating discrimination, promoting equality, and enhancing people’s participation (Amnesty International n.d.), can contribute to salvaging the ruins of our nation. It can serve as a first step towards addressing the injustices inflicted on Palestinians, not only through supporting positive social and political change within their society, but also to gain grounds in the legitimacy war which has been waged against the Israeli colonial occupation for the control of legal and moral discourse (Falk 2013).

3.3. Critical Theory and My Epistemological Stance

The Interpretive/constructivist paradigm is heavily influenced by hermeneutics and phenomenology. Hermeneutics is the study of meaning and interpretation in historical texts. This meaning-making cyclical process is the basis on which the interpretivist paradigm was established (Ernest 1994). The other philosophical movement that influenced the interpretivist paradigm is phenomenology. A phenomenologist advocates the ‘need to consider human beings’ subjective interpretations, their perceptions of the world as our starting point in understanding social phenomena’ (ibid, p. 25).

By only employing the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, researchers encounter the risk of neglecting the power of the external forces that shape behaviour and
events such as the cultural, political, social and economic contexts within which the research participants and researcher function. Interpretivist research may present an incomplete account of social behaviour by neglecting political and ideological contexts (Habermas 1984; Giddens 1976). This is particularly significant when researching education in Palestine where the political context in particular cannot be overlooked. The Israeli colonial occupation dictates, impacts and shapes all aspects of Palestinian lives even in the most private and protected spheres such as the home or the classroom. The research moves from being solely interpretive to being critical and transformative when it questions the context itself. In this context, where the research is rights-based and seeks change, the role of the researcher is instrumental, particularly when communicating the voices of young people regarding their educational experiences (Starkey et al 2014). This role of the researcher in questioning adds depth to the interpretation of the situation, which is presented not only by the researcher, but also by the research participants.

3.4. Interpretive/Constructivist Paradigm and Critical Theory
The critical paradigm stems from a critical theory and interpretative paradigm, but what makes it different is that the critical paradigm focuses on oppression and the need to understand people’s lived experience in context (in this case the research participants). Critical paradigm examines social conditions, uncovers oppressive power and seeks the emancipation of individuals (Littlejohn & Foss 2008). Critical theory takes research based on interpretation and explanation a step further, allowing the researcher to penetrate the deeper levels of meaning that lie beneath superficial appearances (Lukacs 1971). The intention of research under critical theory has an agenda for change, moving beyond merely understanding situations and phenomena to ‘liberating human beings from the circumstances that enslave them’ (Horkheimer 1982, p.244). Another important contribution to research under critical theory, is that it allows the researcher to identify and unearth bodies of ideas, norms, and ideologies that create meanings for constructing social subjects and concepts like ‘gender’, ‘race’ and ‘student’. ‘These roles and identities typify the invisible realm of meanings that stratify people and distribute power and resources’ (Thomas 1993, p.34).
My research combines critical theory and constructivist qualitative methodologies, reaching what is called critical qualitative research or critical constructivism. Critical constructivism is grounded within the notion of constructivism, which asserts that nothing represents a neutral perspective. Critical constructivists take the understanding of social construction and add critical theory to the mix. Different individuals coming from diverse backgrounds will see the world in different ways (Kincheloe 2005). Hence, critical constructivist researchers consider analysing and interpreting their data from a variety of perspectives. There are a number of common aspects that link constructivism and critical theory. Both traditions are more interested in offering interpretations than in explaining natural laws of causality. Both, therefore, offer a challenge to logical positivism, arguing that dynamic social and cultural structures, rather than certain distinguishable variables, constrain human actions. Thus, both are open to the possibility of social change. Also, both eschew the problem of bias in research. Humanistic, constructivist researchers argue that bias should be re-conceptualised in light of the subjective position of the researcher which informs and strengthens one’s interpretation. Critical researchers, particularly those operating within post-colonialist paradigms, recognise power differentials between research participants and researchers. They are also concerned with the role that power plays in research construction and validation processes (Clark 2002). They are particularly interested in the ways these processes privilege some people and marginalise others. Seeking to understand the way that power works within and around the research context would most certainly change meaning-making if it were not considered (Steinberg 2014).

This research aims to investigate the role of the Palestinian education system in a complex and multi-layered political, social and cultural context and gauge the level and extent to which education in general and HRE in particular inform and influence students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the Occupied West Bank. I have adopted critical constructivism to achieve this aim. The research also moves beyond the description and deconstruction of the status quo to providing an alternative vision of HRE in Palestine that would serve the just struggle towards freedom, self-determination and societal emancipation, this will be discussed in chapter (8).
3.5. Epistemological Stances: Critical Constructivism

Being in the field, during both the pilot (March – April 2013) and main field research (February – May 2014) phases, made me realise that an important focus of this research is the individual, meaning my research participants, rather than the group or institution, even when these individuals are part of the institution like the MOE, the school or NGO. The focus is on how the individual understands and constructs the world she/he lives in and experiences, with particular focus on the individuals’ understandings and perceptions of human rights in general and HRE in particular within a unique context of colonial occupation and specific social, cultural and religious values.

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, I employed critical constructivism, which stems out from critical theory, as the guiding epistemological framework to this research. The fundamental principles and aims of critical constructivism are not merely to give an account of society and behaviour, but to contribute to the deconstruction of the oppressive power structures, emancipate the individual and change the structural oppressive conditions that enslave people. These are key elements and drivers of discourses advocating for and anchored in the universal theory of human rights and the ultimate aims of HRE. Hence, a critical constructivist perspective is suited for the examination of HRE in a school setting, be it in the classroom as part of the curriculum or as a whole-school project, and for investigating the bodies responsible for promoting HRE like the MOE or various Palestinian and/or international NGOs or even local community initiatives. This epistemological framework has been successfully applied by academics and researchers in the past to the field of critical education research and is closely linked to the underpinning aims and values of HRE, particularly the notions of emancipation and social change. Additionally, based on my ontological stance, critical constructivism provides me as a researcher and an activist with a framework for unfolding and unpacking the complex context within which HRE takes place in the Occupied West Bank, and enables me to link this understanding to the motivation of engaging with the struggle against the Occupation or creating social and political change within Palestinian society. These issues will be discussed in detail in section (3.6).
In the next section, I discuss critical theory in relation to the main fields of investigation in this research: education, human rights and HRE prior to elaborating on the specific research methods and design, which are discussed in chapter (4).

3.6. Critical theory in Education and Educational Research

Critical theory is an influential paradigm when linked to education and education research. A significant approach to educational research is the paradigm of critical educational research. Below, I discuss curriculum and pedagogy as two main aspects of how critical theory intertwines with education and education research.

3.6.1. Curriculum

The impact of critical theory is apparent and far-reaching when it comes to curriculum research. Utilising critical theory posed four questions in regards to the curriculum tackling: first, the issues of purpose of education in schools; second, experience within the school that serves the purpose; third, effectiveness of the organisation in relation to the experiences; and finally, assessing the attainment of the purpose (Tyler 1949). The questions go beyond the traditional view of schooling and the curriculum that is mechanic and aims to provide students with the knowledge and skills to be fit for the market. These questions highlight that education has a wider purpose within society. The curriculum also reflects power relations and balances. Critical theory allows us to realise that ideologies and powers within the education system determine what type of knowledge is selected to be included in the curriculum, thus ‘curriculum is an ideological selection from a range of possible knowledge’ (Doll 1993). This resonates with Habermas’s (1972) view that knowledge and its selection is neither neutral nor innocent. In the case of the Palestinian curriculum, which is synonymous with textbooks in the language used by my research participants, the selection of knowledge falls under two types, firstly: textual silence and omissions of certain information within the textbooks which happens by MOE design or secondly: teachers’ selection of not including certain topics that are deemed sensitive or inappropriate. This will be discussed in detail in chapter (5). With this analysis in mind, education research under the umbrella of critical theory goes beyond
analysing the existing curricula to investigating the experience of the research participants and engaging with it.

Critical theory allows an understanding of how the research participants construct their perceptions and experiences in the political, social and cultural contexts that determined the nature and types of knowledge included in these curricula. It also facilitates investigating the links between power and values (as curricula are value-laden) by considering the questions: what knowledge is important? Whose knowledge is important? Whose interest does this knowledge serve (or not serve)? And how do curricula and pedagogy serve (or do not serve) different interests? (Cohen et al 2007, p.31). Habermas’s interest in promoting social emancipation, equality, democracy, freedom and individual and collective empowerment requires an exposure of the ideological interests at work in curricula in order for teachers and students to take control of their own lives. Habermas’s emancipatory interest denotes an inescapable political reading of the curriculum and the purposes of education (ibid, p32). His work underpins and informs contemporary and recent curriculum theory (such as Apple 1990).

3.6.2. Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education and social movement that combines education with critical theory. It is the term used to describe what emerges when critical theory encounters education (Kinchenloe & Steinburg 1997). Paulo Freire is considered to be ‘the inaugural philosopher of critical pedagogy’ (McLaren 2000). However, he rarely used the term critical pedagogy himself when describing this philosophy. The philosophy has since developed by a number of critical theorist and educationalists as a praxis-oriented educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognise authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action (Giroux 2010).

Students should have the ability to think critically about their education situation; this way they will be able to recognise connections between their individual problems and experiences and the social contexts in which they are embedded. As students become aware of how social and political systems work and become conscious of themselves as agents, they can identify and critique domination (a
process that Freire calls conscientisation) (Boyce 1996). Realising one’s consciousness is a first step of praxis. Praxis is the power and know-how to take action against oppression while stressing the importance of liberating education. It involves engaging in a cycle of theory, application, evaluation, reflection, and then back to theory. Social transformation is the product of praxis at the collective level (Voke 2007). In critical pedagogy the role of the teachers is of great importance. Teachers must be aware of themselves as practitioners and as human beings if they wish to teach students in a non-threatening and anti-discriminatory way (hooks 1994a).

As mentioned earlier, critical pedagogy, maintaining the essence of the work of Freire, has evolved. Critical pedagogy has moved to the second phase, seeking to become a worldwide, decolonising movement dedicated to listening to and learning from diverse discourses from peoples around the planet. Kincheloe and Steinberg adopt indigenous knowledge in education as a way to expand critical pedagogy and to question educational hegemony (Denzin et al 2008). In brief, there is no standardised definition for indigenous knowledge, however the term refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. Indigenous knowledge informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life. This knowledge is integral to a cultural complex that also encompasses language, systems of classification, resource use practices, social interactions, rituals and spirituality (UNESCO n.d). Indigenous knowledge has always existed. The recognition and intellectual activation of indigenous knowledge today is an act of empowerment by indigenous people. This recognition and activation reveal the wealth and richness of indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences, all of which have been systematically excluded from contemporary educational institutions and from Eurocentric knowledge systems (Battiste 2005). The Islamisation of HRE within the Palestinian education system could be perceived as empowerment and inclusion of indigenous culture and knowledge and as an act of resistance to the dominant and imposed Eurocentric or Western knowledge. However, a critique of indigenous knowledge is as important as a critique of Eurocentrism (Morrow 2008). I will be discussing this point in chapters (5) and (6).
As for educational hegemony, again, there is no one unified definition for this term. However, it relates closely to the concept of ideological hegemony by Antonio Gramsci in which he explains that the school is part of a system in which individuals were socialised into maintaining the status quo (Gramsci 1971). Here the ideology of the powerful and/or the majority is imposed on the less powerful, minorities or vulnerable groups, and there is no room for critical thinking, questioning, active participation and change.

These two aspects (indigenous knowledge and educational hegemony) are particularly important in the context of HRE in the Occupied West Bank. Both will be discussed in details in the empirical findings chapters (5), (6) and (7) as they form a conceptual framework for part of the data generated in the field.

3.7. Critical Theory, Human Rights and Human Rights Education

Human rights is not a mere ideology, theory or set of beliefs. Human rights directly impact practice and people’s lives (Freeman 2002; Eagleton 1991). It is widely agreed that the concept of human rights is inherently interdisciplinary (Freeman 2002). The meaning of human rights is determined primarily by international law. Yet international law can explain neither the enormous variations in the extent to which states do or do not comply with their legal human rights obligations nor the great variations in the extent to which human beings do or do not enjoy their human rights. These variations must be explained by the empirical social sciences (ibid). Linking human rights to social science, practice and real life by moving them from the realm of pure codification to the state of complex implementation allows for studying and researching human rights through the lens of critical theory. Critical theory permits researchers and human rights activists to examine the ways in which human rights are implemented and the failure to enforce them. It allows for the possibility of tackling the deep structural dilemmas that the international political economic system generates. An engagement with critical theory leads to new ways of seeing human rights that might lead to alternative understandings of politics, social structures and cultures in the framework of human rights at the global level (Schick 2006). Critical theory provides a framework to tackle issues that emerge when conducting research in
societies and communities living under Occupation like the case of Palestine or in post-colonial contexts. From my field research in the Occupied West Bank I came across some of these issues that were highlighted by my research participants and are related to: cultural relativism and neo-colonialism, and the international human rights regime and its biased enforcement. These issues are significant within societies that are struggling to preserve or redefine their identity, fighting against external interventions that have the potential to reshape their liberation agenda and skew their vision, and are yearning for a moment of freedom to better understand their position and self as a community and individuals.

A critical theory approach foregrounds three important considerations that the codified human rights regime ignores: the need to acknowledge and work through human suffering; the need for political engagement and risk; and the need to empower the disenfranchised and marginalised through redistribution and recognition (Schick 2006). HRE contributes to moving human rights from rigid statements to enforcement by linking this grand regime to reality, opening space for the integration of universal values into the daily lives and struggles of the people.

The critical theorists’ framework has been taken into education in a number of different ways, but most notably, as mentioned under section (3.3), by Freire and later by Kincheloe, Giroux and Apple who provided additional theoretical accounts of the nature and working of praxis and critical theory in their work. For example, Giroux and other critical educators criticised the argument made by Marxist scholars that schools were merely capitalist agencies of social and economic, cultural and bureaucratic reproduction – Giroux and his colleagues contrasted this argument by stating that schools can be venues of hope and can become sites of resistance and democratic possibility through concerted efforts by teachers and students (Kincheloe & McLaren 2002). This was the case in Palestine under the recurring foreign occupations. A number of examples were mentioned on the role of schools as sites of resistance and struggle under the Ottoman and British rule as well as under the Israeli occupation, particularly in the first Intifada in Chapter (1).
Since 1995, the UN and other agencies have clarified that the inherent components of HRE include knowledge, skills and attitudes consistent with recognised human rights principles that empower individuals and groups to address oppression and injustice (Amnesty International 2003). In Freire’s work we find not only the original concept of praxis, which is widely cited in the HRE field, such as the concept of addressing oppression and injustice in Amnesty’s definition above, but also emancipatory transformation which takes the idea of transformative learning beyond that of the individual into social action and change (Mezirow 1996). Freire’s ideas were born to help with the struggle for the social transformation of the post-colonial world in the interest of liberating subordinate populations and cultures from the structures and ideologies which dominate them (McLaren & Leonard 1993). Finally, Giroux (1988) maintained that schools can become institutions where forms of knowledge, values [such as human rights values], and social relations are taught for the purpose of educating young people for critical empowerment rather than subjugation.

The concept of a critical human rights consciousness, which was mentioned under the discussion of critical pedagogy and the work of Freire and Giroux mentioned above, is a key goal for human rights educators. A critical human rights consciousness includes the ability of students to recognise the human rights dimensions of, and their relationship to, a given conflict or problem-oriented exercise; an expression of awareness and concern about their role in the protection or promotion of these rights; a critical evaluation of the potential responses that may be offered; an attempt to identify or create new responses; a judgment or decision about which choice is most appropriate; and, an expression of confidence and a recognition of responsibility and influence in both the decision and its impact (Meintjes 1997).

Education is an inherently moral and political undertaking that includes questions related to our relationship with others and how we behave towards them, with consequences for the development of a human rights culture (McCowan 2013). HRE is a tool for advancing the struggle to achieve justice, dignity, just and sustainable peace, and empowering people to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights and critical awareness. HRE is
not limited to formal schooling, but for the purposes of this research HRE in schools is the focus. History and the current political conditions remind us that schools, and the arena of education in general, have been critical sites of struggle for equal rights and democratic practices (Subedi & Daza 2008). Formal schooling is by definition political, the educational system will be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy and over the definitions of legitimate authority and culture (Apple 2003). Consequently, research on HRE in specific and educational research in general will have no substantial meaning or impact if the context is not considered and the aims are not transformative.


Critical ethnography combines regular ethnography and critical education research. It is conventional ethnography with a political purpose (Thomas 1993). It seeks to explore the ways in which societal issues and their contradictions are worked out in the context of complex lived lives. Critical ethnography asks what could be in order to disrupt tacit power relationships and perceived social inequalities. It has been called critical theory in practice (ibid 1993).

This approach emerged in the 1970s in England, following on the heels of the emergence of British new sociology (Young 1971). It is a merger between the interpretivist movements in anthropology and sociology with neo-Marxist and feminist theory. Critical ethnographers seek to research accounts sensitive to the dialectical relationship between the social structural constraints on human actors and the relative autonomy of human agency. Unlike other interpretivist research, the overriding goal of critical ethnography is to free individuals from sources of domination and repression (Anderson 1989).

Through this research I aim to reach an in-depth understanding of the nature of HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank and HRE’s impact and role in the life of the students. This includes their engagement in political and social activism and the struggle against the Occupation and social injustice, while juxtaposing this understanding with the formal line of the MOE and NGOs/INGOs that provide HRE programmes and projects and their aims and view of HRE. Regular ethnography allows the researcher to capture highly detailed information about the research setting to construct a fuller picture of the phenomena under study.
(Swidler 1986). Through critical ethnography, in addition to providing a comprehensive understanding, I also aim to examine the possibilities that HRE might provide to support, empower and enhance the agency of individuals (students in this case) to engage in social change and struggle against the Occupation. I employ an amalgamation of ethnographic qualitative research methods, namely: semi-structured individual and group interviews and classroom observations. In addition to these methods I have conducted a comprehensive analysis of policy documents and the curricula in light of the social, cultural and political context.

3.9. Reflexivity

‘Ethnographic researchers are active creators rather than passive recorders of narrative or events’ (Thomas 1993, p.46). Hence, the personal experience of the researcher is an integral part of the research process, emphasising the idea that objectivity in the pure sense is unrealistic and unattainable. ‘The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientations of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the values and interests that these locations confer upon them’ (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p.15). Reflexivity in critical ethnography involves a dialectical process among (a) the researcher's constructs, (b) the informants' constructs, (c) the research data, (d) the researcher's ideological biases, and (e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study (Anderson 1989). In addition to these aspects, the production of knowledge by researchers has consequences. At the very least, the publication of research could shape the climate in which political and practical decisions are made, and it may even directly stimulate particular sorts of action. ‘In fact, it may change the character of the situations that were studied’ (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007, p. 15). This is particularly the case of critical research, where the research is not only aiming to contribute to knowledge production but also transforming and changing the status quo, which embodies oppression and injustice. This point has a particular significance for colonial and post-colonial contexts and is discussed in detail in section (3.10).

Reflexivity was built into my research methodology from the outset of this research journey. Prior to my field research, I used the literature review process
to examine my knowledge and understanding of human rights in general and HRE and education in Palestine in particular. As a practitioner in the field, I have over the years developed a certain view and understanding, which has changed gradually with the process of engaged and critical reading of the literature which made me start the field research with a critical view of human rights and HRE. My position changed from an absolute believer to a skeptic with a vision for change. This is a position which I do not think I would have reached without engaging with a wide range of literature and various research participants experiences. I have kept a journal to record these changes.

I have recognised the fact that my personal relation to the people and the place and my engagement with the struggle for human rights and justice either through my moral connection or through my activism, would pose the issue of bias. This need not be a problem, as I was aware of how this relation and engagement might shape the research results. This awareness helped me avoid either romanticising the context or dismissing data generated in the field that went against my perceptions and beliefs. This realisation links to points (a) the researcher’s constructs and (d) the researcher’s ideological bias, mentioned above. To mitigate any negative implications on the validity and reliability of the research, a number of measures were taken into consideration such as rigorous research methods and openness to academic criticism by presenting the findings of the research at different stages on numerous occasions in academic forums, in addition to continuous consultations with my supervisor and fellow researchers. By doing this, I managed to turn back on myself to examine my intentions, methods, and the possible effects of my research. I accepted the need to be accountable for my research paradigms, authority and power as a researcher, and moral responsibility relative to representation and interpretation (Madison 2005).

In terms of the informants’ constructs which is point (b) above, while in the field, I made efforts to diversify the selection of research participants to attain data from different perspectives, considering the diversity within Palestinian society in terms of religious, political, social, cultural and institutional backgrounds and affiliations.
The data itself, point (c), was also acquired from various and diverse sources and triangulated continuously.

The final issue that needs to be reflected on is point (e), which is the context within which the research was taking place. As the research focused on the Occupied West Bank, it is important to recognise that the unique political conditions are fast-changing and affect almost all aspects of life. This is reflected in all the stages of the research by identifying key changes and their impact on the context, participants and research process and reflecting on such changes during the research design phase, data collection and analysis. For example, during the analysis phase, levels of violence by the Israeli army against Palestinian children in the Occupied West Bank have increased following an incident where a Palestinian child in Occupied East Jerusalem was kidnapped by Jewish settlers and burnt to death at the end of June 2014. This incident encouraged me to focus in more depth on the aspect of violence against Palestinian students by the Israeli army and Jewish settlers, particularly boys, and the impact of this violence and how that links to their understanding of human rights and its role in achieving justice. This turning point is highlighted within the data analysis chapters.

In addition to the technical research bias mitigation measures mentioned above, I have made efforts on a personal level to reflect on my feelings throughout the research process, particularly during the field research phase. The prominent Palestinian human rights lawyer and activist Raja Shehadeh, describing a similar experience said: ‘When you write your thoughts, feelings and emotions ... then you can move on to new ones. Otherwise, they will keep rotating in your mind and you will go in circles’ (Shehadeh 2014). To avoid, as much as possible, having thoughts and feelings rotating in my mind, affecting the clarity of thinking and deciding on critical aspects of my research such as data generation and analysis, I chose to write detailed weekly memos to my supervisor and await his comments eagerly. His comments, as an outsider, facilitated my ability to be critical and reflective. This reflexivity was carried with me throughout the field research, the analysis and the writing up processes. This profound reflecting
opportunity was an integral part of my journey of evolution, change and discovery.

3.10. Decolonising Research on Palestine

‘If we think of the nations we are born into, and if we desire inclusiveness and equality, a forward looking consideration of what a nation can become, rather than what it is, will make a difference... A being is necessary for a becoming, thus one cannot equate a colonised with a coloniser- whereas the coloniser exercises an agency to become, a colonised is caught up in a fight to be’ (Abu Assab 2014).

When I started my research, I did not think about the issue of decolonising research on Palestine or Palestinians. However, during my pilot field research one of the students I interviewed said: ‘you know what Miss! Palestinians must be the most researched people in the world!’ That remark was followed by a cynical question: ‘What's the point?’ My research participants raised a number of ethical issues including the methods by which researchers obtain data, the gap between what the community needs and the objectives of the researcher and his/her funders, in addition to the fact that those researched never see the final product of the research and never feel any impact. That type of research, which the research participants have no idea what the point of it is, might actually be done to influence policy or maybe initiate action directly related to the researched community or individuals by foreign donors or implementing agencies.

These issues, raised by my research participants, made me think of postcolonial theory and Said’s idea of Orientalism. In my research participants’ view, research is done to Us in order for the Other to collect information about Us that can be acted upon, in policy decisions and in popular representations (Rizvi and Lingard 2006). We, Palestinians in this case, are seen based on Said’s own words and the understanding of my research participants as ‘separate, eccentric, backward, silently different, sensual, and passive, always subject to supine malleability’ (Said [1978] 2003). We are perceived as incapable of making change ourselves but waiting for the outside saviour.
Accordi
ing to Said, the discourse of Orientalism ultimately reveals less about the
colonised people than it does about the perspective and interests of the Western
people who study them and seek to exercise control over them (Rizvi and Lingard
2006). My research participants understood exactly what Said meant. This
understanding stems from their recurring experience with colonial research. They
understood that their voice and agency is not the core of any of the academic or
empirical work/research. The end result is outward facing, produced to appease a
certain donor or international agency or body.

I am aware of the fact that some of the research aspects cannot be changed,
such as the minimal impact, at least in the short run, on the research participants
and their communities, the methods used and the fact that research participants
have no control over how they will be represented in the final product. Generally,
research participants, Palestinians in this case, are represented as the victims or
perpetrators where research is done by INGOs or Western academics that
conform to certain stereotypes and generalisations. I decided to break this
pattern, although I used colonial methods and I was unable to include the full
involvement of my research participants due to a lack of time and resources, and
the political and social contexts. This attempt to breaking this pattern is most
visible in the data analysis chapters where data generated from the field
determined the direction of the research.

While making sense of my data, I did not limit myself to one theory that has the
potential to explain the data from one dimension and lens, but kept an open mind
to different theories and explanations. Indigenous people have been, in many
ways, oppressed by theory, and identify research and theory as significant sites
of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the
interests and ways of resisting the Other (Smith 1999). In the case of Palestine,
human rights theory and framework is an example of this. In this research,
tackling the human rights framework and theory from a critical perspective allows
the data generated from the field to unearth tensions between the universality
and social/cultural relativity. Additionally, adopting a critical approach leads to
uncovering the way Palestinians understand human rights theory, and how they
perceive it as a hypocritical and hegemonic tool unless it is contextualised and vernacularised.

I am aware that critical theory and its methods have been seen as failing indigenous, [colonised] and other marginalised peoples. As they are viewed as less than ideal for these communities, where indigenous [and post-colonial] researchers are anxious to discover their own ways of naming and carrying out research, informed by and taking into account the legacies of previous research, but not limited by it (Gilmore 2002). Again, influenced by the work of Said where he favoured patterns of thinking that are connected to marginal, alienated, and anti-systemic forces, what he called secular criticism freed from the restrictions of intellectual specialisation [a particular theoretical framework or theoretical lens in the case of this research] (Rizvi & Lingard 2006). Building on these ideas, while using critical constructivism and critical ethnography, I attempt to affirm subaltern knowledge and make space for authentic voices by having the ideas of my research participants central rather than external to the theory, and bringing local knowledge to the forefront of this research.

3.11. Conclusion

I started this chapter by clarifying my ontological stance which stems from my personal values, where I come from, how I see the world and how I perceive knowledge. I am a Palestinian and have strong ties to the place and the people. I am a human rights activist led by the values of justice, equality and human dignity. These two factors in effect shape my position as a researcher and hence my ontological stance.

The chapter then moves on to discussing the selection of critical constructivism as the epistemological stance of the research based on my aim to investigate the role of the Palestinian education system within a multi-layered context, and gauge the level and extent to which education in general and HRE in particular are linked to students’ engagement and participation in activism. Critical constructivism helps me move beyond the description and analysis of the status quo, by critically analysing elements such as pedagogy and curriculum, to provide an alternative vision of HRE in Palestine. In this chapter I explained how critical
constructivism is suited for the examination of HRE in a school setting, and for investigating the bodies responsible to promote HRE.

I followed this epistemological stance by explaining how it is linked to critical ethnography and how methods of critical ethnography were employed during my field research. This will pave the way to the discussion in the following chapters, which shows how critical ethnographic methods helped me deconstruct and unearth oppressive power structures and propose emancipatory alternatives led and shaped by the participants themselves.

This chapter also highlighted the concepts of indigenous knowledge and educational hegemony, both of which are particularly important in the context of HRE in the Occupied West Bank and will be used in the analysis chapters (5),(6), and (7). These concepts, along with employing a critical lens to understanding HRE, will contribute to moving human rights from rigid promulgation to enforcement by linking this grand regime to reality, opening space for the integration of universal values into the daily lives and struggles of the people. Having said that, a researcher who is part of the indigenous context and has a personal and emotional connection to the theme, people and the place, needs to be self-reflective to ensure that bias in and within the research is highlighted, justified and is part of the knowledge production. This research is also an opportunity to test this idea and attempt to decolonise research on Palestine and allow for the creation of bottom-up, indigenous and contextualised knowledge.

In the following chapter, the research design and methods used in both phases of the field research will be discussed.
Chapter (4)
Research Design and Methods

4.1. Introduction
Following my main field research, and after reviewing critical literature and literature produced by Palestinian academics and practitioners, my three research questions evolved to include two introductory questions which captured the elements of knowledge production and explained the status of HRE in the Occupied West Bank. I included a third question that was critical and captured the praxis element within the particular environment of prolonged occupation and the specific cultural and social context. This chapter aims to clarify how critical ethnographic methods were employed and adapted to generate data during two field visits, and how thematic data analysis methods were applied to answer the three research questions:

- **What are the sources of influence that shape human rights education (HRE) in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the Occupied West Bank?**

- **Considering the Palestinian context, what are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the Occupied West Bank about human rights in general and HRE in particular?**

- **To what extent does HRE inform students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the Occupied West Bank?**

Starting this research process, I have depended initially on my knowledge and experience in the field of HRE in Palestine to formulate the primary research questions, which were in the form of research objectives and led the direction of the pilot field research and the selection of literature reviewed during that early stage. My initial objective was to identify gaps and pitfalls in HRE programming, strategy and implementation in the Occupied West Bank and provide recommendations that would inform future HRE policies and strategies. My starting point was to explain rather than problematise. The two phases of field
research changed the direction of the research. I realised the importance of conducting critical research; the experience in the field and the data generated from the pilot field research, in particular, changed my thinking and the scope of the research questions. The direction of my research moved from producing knowledge about the status of HRE in the Occupied West Bank and explaining the gaps and pitfalls to actually problematising the HRE global discourse when applied in the Occupied West Bank and link HRE theory to practice, in this case the struggle against the Occupation and for social/political change. The critical ethnography methods and thematic data analysis explained below were designed and implemented to answer the three research questions.

4.2. Two Phases of Field Research

This research seeks to investigate the understandings and perceptions of individuals about human rights and HRE in a complex political and social context. With this knowledge available, the research moves a step further and links these understandings and perceptions to political and social praxis. To achieve this, a number of ethnographic methods were employed which foregrounded issues of power relations, societal values, domination and oppression, and had an emancipatory agenda in mind.

‘Once we begin collecting our data, the project’s focus should become clearer…as we begin to appreciate more fully the cultural nuances we observe. New images spawn new questions, which in turn lean to sharper images, and at this point we can….begin to conceptualize more carefully the critical component of the research’ (Thomas 1993, p.42).

The pilot field visit, which was conducted between the 27th of March and 15th April 2013, contributed substantially to the formulation of the three research questions stated in section (4.1) above. Through observing the nuances within the context from the ground and conducting interviews with key participants, I was able to identify key issues to focus on that are timely and critical in the field of HRE in the Occupied West Bank. I was able to move from the generic to the topical (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007), from having a general overshadowed problem (Malinowski 1922) to having precise research questions. The other aim that I achieved during the pilot field research was the identification of data sources. I was able to build a pool of contacts including gatekeepers, like those in strategic
positions at the MOE and NGOs as well as academics. I was also able to identify and reach those who have insider knowledge such as teachers, head teachers and students. During the field research I depended solely on personal contacts and networks, however due to the high level of cooperation of all those I met and the snowball effect, I was able to identify and successfully contact my key informants and lay the ground for my main field research visit. Finally, by being in the field I was able to devise criteria for sampling schools based on geographical location, socio-economic conditions, gender balance, and vulnerability, proximity and levels of engagement to and with the Occupation.

The main field research took place between 25 February and 15 May 2014, during which I collected large amounts of data from various sources, using a number of ethnographic methods. I conducted individual interviews with key contacts at the MOE, Palestinian NGOs, International NGOs and academics. I also conducted individual interviews with civics teachers, head teachers and school counsellors. Group interviews were conducted with 9th grade students. I was also provided by MOE and various NGOs with school textbooks and reports in addition to academic papers, some of which are not published but contain critical information for my research. Only a limited number of photos were taken during the field research, as schools did not allow me to take photos in classrooms or during group interviews. Other sources of data, which will be used for analysis, are the reflective field notes and memos which I produced over the course of the field research.

4.2.1. Sampling
Convenience sampling was implemented for the purpose of the pilot field research, particularly in relation to the schools visited and the members and locations of the focus groups that were conducted. The sampling was based on personal connections. During this phase, I was testing my research tools such as the ethnographic methods (individual and group interviews), the questions asked during the interviews and the level of access I was able to gain to different institutions and participants.
Having gained the experience in the field, gained access to key contacts, tweaked my interview questions and articulated my research questions, I followed the method of purposive sampling during the main field research. Purposive sampling is when the researcher samples participants and locations in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed. The sample in this case ensures a good deal of variety within the sample so that the sample members differ from each other in terms of key characteristics (Bryman 2008). Based on the characteristics relevant to my research questions, I devised criteria for selecting my sample. Also the sample selection was on a number of levels. Both the criteria and the levels of samples can be represented as follow:

4.2.1.1. Institutions
a. Ministry of Education (MOE)
The MOE in Palestine is the biggest ministry in terms of the number of its employees, the scope of its work and the number of its beneficiaries. It also has a number of institutions affiliated to it such as the national teachers training institute and a number of vocational centres. Navigating within the ministry is a challenging task, in this case personal contacts proved to be highly beneficial during the pilot field research phase as I was able to identify the gatekeepers in the ministry, particularly those who engaged in planning and formulating policies and strategies as well as individuals within the ministry units who work on human rights education and NGO-supported projects in schools. In addition to this information that allowed me to reach key participants/interviewees, I ensured a gender balance (when possible) as well as a geographical balance. The MOE in Palestine is highly centralised and hierarchical, in my sample I made a conscious decision to interview MOE employees in rural and marginalised areas as well as those based in the MOE headquarters in Ramallah.

b. Palestinian NGOs
There are hundreds of Palestinian NGOs operating in the Occupied West Bank, a large number of them work in the fields of human rights and education. Some NGOs who do not explicitly work in these two fields employ human rights-based approaches to their projects with children as well as providing educational and/or
awareness-raising activities around human rights issues such as women’s rights and children’s rights. I have mapped all these NGOs in the Occupied West Bank and reviewed their goals and current activities. Based on this mapping and review, NGOs were selected and contacted. The majority of them agreed to connect me with the relevant employee(s) who I could interview. The majority of the NGOs I selected were based in Ramallah; this was due to time limitations and logistical reasons, including the movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli occupation.

c. International NGOs
The majority of international NGOs working on education, human rights and children’s rights operate in the Occupied West Bank. However, not all of those NGOs were willing to cooperate and give me time for an interview. I interviewed key individuals who worked on education, human rights and/or HRE projects from six NGOs, five of them based in Ramallah and one in Jerusalem. While selecting the NGOs I also considered the gender balance. The geographical aspect was not an element as all NGOs were based in either Jerusalem or Ramallah.

d. Schools
During the pilot field visit I conducted individual interviews with civics teachers and head teachers in two girls’ schools in two villages close to the city of Qalqilia in the North of the Occupied West Bank. In these two schools I also conducted group interviews (focus groups). The selection of these schools, as mentioned earlier, was based on personal contacts.

During my main field research, three schools were selected. Criteria for selecting these schools included coverage of geographical locations (north, south and middle of the Occupied West Bank), socio-economic aspects (rural/urban – affluent/low income) and a gender balance (mixed, girls only, boys only) as well as proximity to Israeli military checkpoints, the illegal separation and annexation wall and illegal Jewish settlements. A detailed list in appendix (1).
In the schools, I interviewed civics teachers and school counsellors. Each school has one part-time counsellor and one civics teacher. Only one school had two civics teachers and I interviewed both of them. I also interviewed head teachers. I conducted group interviews with 9th grade students. The groups of students were selected based on information collected during the pilot field visit. I learnt that 9th grade students on a national level are involved in HRE projects provided by NGOs and that 9th grade civics textbooks have a substantial human rights component. The selection of students for the group interviews was based on random sampling, details are included under section 4.2.4.

4.2.1.2. Individuals
a. Activists
I interviewed a number of activists during both field visits. The selection was based on a gender balance and the type of activism they did (political activism, human rights activism, campaigning and social/political journalism). All the activists I interviewed were based in Ramallah.

b. Academics
I interviewed a number of academics working in universities or Palestinian NGOs. The majority of the academics I interviewed were based in Ramallah, only one academic was based at Al Najah University in Nablus. I considered a gender balance when selecting the academics. Details are in appendix (1).

In my original field research plan, prior to the pilot field research I wanted to interview religious figures and representatives from political parties. When I contacted two religious figures, one Christian and one Muslim, they assured me that they were not involved in the field of education and that religious bodies do not influence the education process in Palestine. The MOE representatives and academics I interviewed reiterated this. When I contacted the cultural, education and mobilisation departments of three political parties they also mentioned that they do not engage or influence formal education in the Occupied West Bank. I also asked my interviewees from the MOE, NGOs and academics about this and they assured me that the political parties do not influence formal education in Palestine. I did not conduct any interviews with either religious leaders or...
representatives of political parties. However, in spite of the possible absence of direct engagement of the religious bodies, personalities and political parties and figures with the education system, the political and religious influence is apparent within the school curriculum and education system as a whole. This will be discussed in the analysis chapters.

4.2.2. Context (s)

4.2.2.1. Macro Level context

This research is conducted in a complex, multi-layered and fast-changing political and social context. The factors that have the ability to change the reality in the case of the Occupied West Bank are various and unpredictable. Here I am talking about a geographical area and a population that are dominated completely by an occupying force that controls every aspect of the lives of Palestinians, the space and the landscape. The views and perceptions of my research participants are primary to my research and rooted in the research questions. The perceptions should be understood as far from being merely anecdotal; rather they are constructed based on real life experiences. The changes in the context due to the measures and decisions made by the Occupation change the context and consequently the perceptions of the participants. The rapid and severe change in the political and social context is considered during all the phases of research design, data collection, analysis and writing up.

4.2.2.2. Micro Level context

The micro-level context in the case of this research is the school. The schools in the Occupied West Bank are affected by changes in the macro political and social context. My visits to the schools gave me a clear idea how the mood and the environment shifted severely within the school with political and social changes. For example, in the boys’ school in the North of the Occupied West Bank, my first visit was easy, pleasant and I witnessed the students playing in the school yard and going through their school day with no major incidents. However, during another visit, Jewish settlers attacked the school. The schooling day was interrupted, the settlers and the Israeli army attacked everyone in the school experienced suffocating gas bombs and some students were beaten. The days
following this incident, the mood and environment in the school shifted to being tense and violent, where the students carried knives and slingshots to protect themselves. Some students did not show up to school. Due to this drastic incident, the perceptions and views of the students towards human rights and HRE changed. These incidents are documented in my field notes and memos and reflected in the data analysis.

4.2.3. Access

I anticipated barriers to access particularly during my pilot field visit for two main reasons. First, this is my first time conducting ethnographic research within the field of education in the Occupied West Bank; hence, at that time, I had not yet mapped and acquired the main links and contacts to obtain access to educational institutions, particularly the MOE and schools. Personal connections are key to conducting any work within Palestinian society in general. Second, the physical and security barriers to free movement within the Occupied West Bank that are imposed and created by the Israeli army are difficult to expect and manage. This aspect does not only have the potential to block and hinder my physical access to certain locations and schools but also might pose a security threat to me as a Palestinian, activist and researcher as well as to my research participants. This will be discussed in more detail under the ethical considerations section.

Fortunately, the pilot field research gave me the opportunity to create links with key gatekeepers in the field of education who facilitated my access to both the MOE and schools. Having spent a number of years working with human rights NGOs in the Occupied West Bank I had unlimited access to these NGOs, who in turn introduced me to NGOs working in the field of education. People working in education-specialised NGOs put me in touch with key contacts within the MOE.

The MOE granted me unlimited access to the schools I selected once I explained my research thoroughly and provided them with supporting documents and information such as the research information sheet (appendix (2)), IOE contacts and my supervisor’s name and contact information. I also provided them with recommendations from Palestinian human rights NGOs supporting my research. The MOE provided me with all documentation related to my research including
documents that are not available publicly or are still under review. I was also provided with personal phone numbers of MOE senior civil servants who were willing to interfere in case I faced any difficulties during my school visits. They were also willing to have follow up interviews and answer any further questions I might have following both phases of my field research.

My access to the three schools was also relatively trouble-free. It was only in one school, the girls’ school in the south of the Occupied West Bank, where I had issues with access. The head teacher of that school demanded detailed information about my activities during each visit and limited the time I could access the classrooms for observations and the frequency of my visits. I was only allowed three visits to this school. Also, the group interview I conducted with the girls in that school was attended by their civics teacher. I only had 35 minutes to conduct the group interview based on the instructions of the head teacher. The head teacher was not willing to have an interview with me.

In terms of access to NGOs, Palestinian NGOs were welcoming and interested in my work. A number of them asked me to send them the results of my field research to read. I promised to send my final thesis and any academic papers I may produce based on the field research. In addition to that, Palestinian NGOs were willing to share documents and reports they produced, even those under review or ones that were not available publicly. This experience was similar to the one I had with academics who also guided me to a number of key people who would benefit from my research. All the research participants I met within Palestinian NGOs and the academics were willing to share their contacts with me for any further questions or meetings.

International NGOs were stricter in terms of access, particularly UN agencies. One of them refused to meet with me during my field visit, but I gained access to them through personal contacts and after numerous requests. The information that was provided during the interview with this particular UN agency was limited and superficial. The time I spent at their offices was short and I felt unwelcomed.
The majority of the interviewees agreed to have their interviews audio-recorded. Only three interviewees asked me not to record the interview but they were not opposed to me taking detailed notes. They actually paused between sentences to give me time to write every single word they had said. During my group interview at the school in the middle of the Occupied West Bank, the students asked me to stop the recording a number of times as they were sharing personal and sensitive information.

The majority of the research participants signed consent forms, including the students. Only one interviewee from an NGO refused to sign the form but agreed that I use the data he provided verbally. The head teacher of the girls school in the south of the Occupied West Bank did not allow me to ask the students to sign consent forms as she said that her signature and the signature of both civics teachers are enough. In this particular school I did not speak to any of the students without the presence of their teacher.

During my visits to the MOE, schools, Palestinian and/or INGOs I made sure to give something, a token to show appreciation for their time and the invaluable information they provided me with. I selected a large number of Amnesty International's HRE publications both in Arabic and English and made sure to give this material to my research participants.

In terms of the security situation, fortunately, during both of my field visits I did not encounter any security barriers to my movement. However, during one of my visits to the boys’ school in the north of the Occupied West Bank, the school was attacked initially by Jewish settlers, and this attack was followed by an Israeli army attack of the school. This incident provided me with rich data. Luckily, none of the students, teachers or myself were physically injured. However, we were all traumatised. In this particular school, during my main field research visit, two schooling days were interrupted and I was unable to conduct my school visit. The first day was interrupted due to celebrations initiated by the PA for the occasion of the visit of the Palestinian president to the US where he refused negotiations with Israel. That was seen as a political victory. School students were forced to cut their schooling day short and go out on mass marches to show their loyalty to the
ruling party, the PA and the president. The second day I was not able to conduct my planned visit was due to a school spring trip. My schedule was flexible as I anticipated disruptions. Therefore I was able to conduct the visits during subsequent weeks.

4.2.4. Generating the Data

‘A single word, even one merely descriptive of the dress of a person, or a particular word uttered by someone usually is enough to “trip off” a string of images that afford substantial reconstruction of the observed scene’ (Schatzman & Strauss 1973, p.95)

To generate data in the field, I used a number of ethnographic methods, namely: semi-structured individual and group interviews and classroom observations. In addition to these two methods I observed the context, took detailed field notes and produced memos during my field visits. Data was also collected from available documentation produced by different institutions such as the MOE, Palestinian academic institutions and NGOs as well as INGOs.

There were a number of issues that surfaced during the data collection process in the field during both field research phases. The experience of the pilot field research phase provided critical insights. It allowed me to be more flexible, alert and able to identify questions that might not be incisive. The pilot phase also gave me the skill to identify contradictions, anomalies and discrepancies within the answers of the interviewees. It gave me the ability to fight the temptation to let these issues pass, and actually pursue follow-up questions, crosscheck with other research participants or find answers by thoroughly observing the context. Having decided to work under a critical constructivist paradigm, I also was determined to unearth issues related to power and gender relations and discrimination, in addition to mechanisms used to deal with these aspects, within the society in general or in the school context specifically. For example, during the pilot field research I interviewed an MOE official whose answers were similar to the official mainstream non-critical line on HRE. At that time, I did not question her answers, however, during data review and analysis that followed the pilot phase I realised the discrepancy between her answers and the answers of the
students and NGO representatives. This made me more vigilant about digging deeper under the surface of possible answers that tended to follow an official uncritical line, hide gaps and pitfalls. As a critical ethnographer, I became alert for informants’ answers that were contradictory, that did not correspond to other informants’ answers, that contradicted with observed reality or implied cover-ups or gaps (Thomas 1993). During my main field research, one of the strategies I employed was to allow time after the semi-structured interviews with some of my participants for an informal conversation where I returned to the questions that I thought their answers to were not genuine or critical. These informal conversations revealed the information under the surface. For ethical reasons, I confronted these interviewees with their contradictory answers and I asked their permission to use the informal but sincere answers. In the majority of cases the response was a friendly laugh and a nod. In the case of critical ethnography, prodding strategies and digging under the surface not only ensure the reliability and credibility of the data, but also unwraps issues of power struggles, repression and gender dimensions.

During my research, I focused on the perceptions and understandings of my research participants. I aimed to speak truth to power (Said 1994), to eventually propose a critical understanding of HRE in the Occupied West Bank and reach an emancipatory vision through this research. I focused on the individual as I recognise that culture is variable and diverse, particularly within Palestinian society, not only because it consists of various groups from different socio-economic religious and cultural backgrounds, but also because of the prolonged segregation imposed by the colonial occupation of Palestinian communities. This renders them detached from one another and forms new realities and cultures. Having an individual view from within these communities contributes to the verification and validation of the dominant group knowledge and beliefs. Also, focusing on the individual gave me the opportunity to keep some distance from official or institutional bodies and concentrate on indigenous critical praxis. Critical praxis refers to people’s own critical reflection on culture, history, knowledge, politics, economics, and the sociopolitical contexts in which they are living their lives (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo 2001). My focus was to amplify the voices of the individuals over the institutions. I was interested in the opinions and views of the
MOE civil servants as individuals and not the official line of the ministry, the NGO workers as professionals and activists, not as employees of their institutions and the students as active members of society and not only as citizens-to-be or children with limited or no agency as the Palestinian society frames them. This issue also surfaced during the pilot field research.

The above-mentioned issues and aspects led me to make changes to the interview questions following the pilot field visit as well as during the main field research visit. The questions used during the pilot phase were general and aimed to provide me with guidance to articulate and focus my research questions and better understand the field and the context. A full list of questions used during both the pilot field research and the main field research are listed in appendix (3).

4.2.4.1. Ethnographic Methods
a. Individual Interviews

During my pilot field research I conducted individual interviews with two MOE officials, two NGO representatives, one activist and four academics. The interviews lasted between 40-60 minutes and were all conducted in Arabic. Detailed list in appendix (1). The transcription was done personally. Translation to English was done after the coding and analysis for the purposes of writing up. These interviews had an important role, particularly in the initial information-gathering phase of the research. The data generated was the basis of additional contacts and interviews during the main field research visit and helped to identify key documentation. Also, the interviews provided me with an opportunity to form a clear picture about the conceptions, perceptions and understandings of HRE in the Occupied West Bank. They also played a guiding role for me to better articulate the research problem and formulate the research questions. The interviews were conducted in closed spaces, usually an office. The majority of the interviews were audio-recorded, which allowed me to give the interviewee total attention and be alert to changes in their responses, clarifying particular points, following up and asking new questions, while maintaining the flow of the conversation. I also took brief notes of the key ideas and terms. The audio recording also allowed me to identify the flows in my questioning techniques where sometimes I tended to interrupt the interviewee and hence lose valuable
information. This was taken into consideration during the main field research phase.

Individual interviews during the main field research took a similar format, but with more thorough and focused questions and a larger number of interviewees. During this phase I interviewed four MOE officials, thirteen Palestinian NGO representatives, seven INGO representatives, two political activists, six civics teachers and school counsellors, two head teachers and five academics. The majority of the interviews were audio-recorded. All the interviews were conducted in Arabic apart from the interview with UNESCO, which was conducted in English. The transcriptions were done partly by myself, but for time considerations I used the help of a professional human rights practitioner and a lawyer (Yasser) to transcribe the majority of the individual interviews. Yasser signed a form that included articles related to protecting the anonymity of the interviewees and the integrity of the data (Transcriber’s agreement in appendix (4)). He was also paid a compensation for his work. To avoid any errors in the transcriptions, I read all the transcriptions against the recorded interviews and ensured that they matched word for word. This also helped me to re-live and revisit the conversations before beginning the analysis process.

Similar to the data generated from individual interviews during the pilot phase, the transcriptions were done in Arabic, particularly in Palestinian spoken Arabic. The coding and the analysis were done in Arabic as well. The data was translated to English when used for the purposes of writing up, but when the translation was not done literally, word for word, I aimed for accurate approximations that remained faithful to the original. Issues related to the ethics of translation and using English to represent the voice of participants who are Arabic speakers, tackling issues of power and decolonisation, are discussed in more detail under the section on decolonising research on Palestine in chapter (3).
b. Group Interview (Focus groups)
During the pilot field research visit I conducted three group interviews, two in PA girls’ schools with 9th grade female students in villages near the city of Qalqilia in the north of the Occupied West Bank and one in a youth center (mixed gender) in a village west of the city of Ramallah. The civics teachers attended the group interviews in both schools, the students signed consent forms and the interviews were audio-recorded. The interviews lasted between 45 – 60 minutes. During the group interview in the youth center I also used two activities. In the first activity, the students were asked to write their understanding, feelings and perceptions around the term human rights. The students had the chance to discuss what they wrote and explain their positions to me and to their colleagues. In the second activity, the students were provided with a sheet that had the following categories: at school, in a public place, at home, in a workshop, from my friends, at work. The students were asked to put a coloured sticker beside the category where they felt they learn most about human rights. The students had the chance to reflect on the results of this exercise. Photos of the outcomes of both activities are in appendix (5). I did not use this method in the two schools, as the time and space were limited and the setting was more formal. This was also the case during the group interviews during the main field research phase where I only used semi-structured interviews which allowed for a detailed discussion.

In the three schools I visited and conducted research in during the main field visit, I conducted three group interviews with 9th grade students. Only one of the group interviews was attended by a civics teacher. The group interviews lasted between 35 -90 minutes. In the two group interviews where I was alone with the students, the students talked about their personal problems and raised the issue of violence in the school including sexual violence and bullying by teachers. The depth and intensity of the discussions in these two group interviews in addition to the complete lack of attention to what was happening in the classroom by the teachers and head teachers in both of these schools allowed me to spend more time with the students. Two of the group discussions were audio-recorded from beginning to end. The recording from the group interview with the students at the mixed school is not complete as the students asked me to stop the recording
when they talked about issues such as bullying by teachers. Details of the number of students in each group interview and timing is in appendix (1).

c. Classroom Observations

I conducted nine observations during 9th grade civics classes at the three sample schools, with three classroom observations in each school. Before I started observing the civics classes, during the first class in each school I was given the chance to introduce myself, my research and the purpose of the observations. I also clarified that I would not participate in any of the discussions and that I would only be taking notes. At that point the students signed consent forms, aside from the students at the girls’ school in the south of the Occupied West Bank. In each observation session, I would enter the classroom just before the class started to avoid any possible disruption, and sit at the back of the classroom, watch, listen and take notes. I used a classroom observation form (appendix 6). My observations were guided by the HRE framework: learning about human rights, learning through human rights and learning for human rights. I also noted the dynamics between the students and the teacher and among the students themselves the time dedicated to discussion and the pedagogy applied by the teacher. Issues of cultural relativism and gender focus were also primary in my observations.

I am aware of the fact that my presence in the classrooms changed the dynamics and possibly the pedagogy used. This was also noted and documented in my field notes and memos. My presence was less visible in the girls’ school as I was able to disappear in the back in one of the most crowded classrooms I observed. Another strategy that I used to create fewer disturbances in the classroom while observing was inspired by Olesen and Whittaker’s research on student nurses (1968). I felt it was more appropriate to write my notes when the students were writing and to listen when they were listening. Since there were no classroom activities and rote learning was dominant, this was not a difficult task to do. I noticed that when I start writing when the students are not, I attract attention and create an environment of unease as the students and teacher feel watched and every movement and word they make and say might be documented. Similarly,
when the students are writing and I am not, the teacher feels uncomfortable, as I
will be looking at her/him.

d. Field Notes and Memos
In this sub-section, field notes refer to written notes taken during the field visits or
reflections after every field visit day. They refer to what can be described as a
fieldwork journal (excerpt in appendix (7)).

Note taking in the field is never a straightforward, meticulous process. Fortunately
for me, it was not the main means of data recording. The field notes I recorded
included particular incidents I observed within the different contexts, events
arising which were not planned or unexpected, ideas that came to mind while in
the field or personal reflections.

From the pilot field visits I learnt to restrain my urge to record every single event
and word said outside of my interviews, or at least attempt to. This proved to be
impossible and confusing. I managed to suppress my feeling that I might miss
critical data in the interest of producing concise, coherent, focused and good-
quality notes that contributed to the main body of data being generated. However,
it is important to note that this urge to record every single detail during the pilot
phase was present due to the fact that my research questions and focus were not
clear. As the research progressed and a particular focus was identified, the field
notes became more restricted and led by the three research questions. From the
field research visits I also learnt that the location and timing of writing of these
field notes was of great importance. Sometimes writing notes can be disruptive or
create discomfort for the research participants in the field. During school visits I
ensured that note taking was congruent to the setting; I joined a number of
trainee teachers in between classes or during breaks who were also using that
time to record their notes or prepare for their sessions. Field notes that followed
my interviews with MOE, NGOs and academics were written in the evenings or
while in transportation.
Another body of written material that was closely related to the fieldwork journal or field notes were memos. The field notes were worked up, expanded on and developed into weekly memos. These weekly memos acted as written notes whereby the progress of the field research was assessed, emergent ideas were identified and research strategy and follow up were sketched out (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). The analysis and ideas that emerged from re-writing the field notes and thinking through the data were put in brackets to separate them from the ideas and data provided by the research participants.

The regular production of these reflexive memoranda constituted primary ideas for the analysis; providing me with guidance to progress, indication of gaps, follow up points and guidance through the corpus of the data. Going back to the issue of reflexivity, the construction of these memos constituted internal dialogue or thinking supporting my critical and reflexive ethnography.

4.2.4.2. Context Observation
As mentioned under the context section (4.2.2), this research was conducted within a complicated, multi-layered setting on both macro and micro levels. Any change in either of these contexts, or even globally, has the potential to change the trajectory of data drastically. For this reason, while in the field it was essential that I kept track of all the political changes and developments, which in turn affected the environment and mood within the schools and other institutions. These changes were noted in the field notes and memos when they occurred.

In addition to this, and particularly in schools, I was aware of the fact that my presence may have changed certain attitudes of teachers, counsellors and head teachers. I made sure to spend whole days in the three schools to observe the dynamics, behaviours and attitudes of teachers, counsellors, head teachers and students. For example, when I was in the classroom observing, the civics teachers used kind, professional and friendly language with the students. However, during breaks and in between classes, the language used with students changed. Terms like wala ya haywan / waleh ya haywaneh which mean you animal (masculine and feminine) were used to call students and get them to obey rules and orders.
From the outset of my field research, I realised that data generated from interviews and conversations, while an essential aspect of my research, cannot be understood and/or analysed properly without the observation and examination of the socially organised action (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Context observation helped me see through a critical lens the underlying issues such as the gender relations between and amongst students and teachers. Context observation allowed me to understand power relations as barriers to students’ emancipation and capability to make change.

Context observation gave me the opportunity to identify issues that were not communicated by the interviewees. In addition to focusing on the performance of routine actions and rituals, observation must give attention to unusual, deviant and problematic events and situations. While numerically rare and possibly coincidental, they provide important information based on how social actors respond to them (ibid).

4.2.4.3. Documentation
As mentioned in chapter (1), I conducted a thorough review of the literature prior to the two field research visits. The review covered various topics such as: Palestinian education, education for social change, emancipatory education, HRE and its links to social change and conflict, human rights universality and cultural relativism and other human rights and education related disciplines in the context of conflict and post-colonialism. Additionally, a substantial number of documents were collected and reviewed while in the field. During my meetings with MOE officials, (I)NGO representatives and academics, I was provided with reports produced by different bodies that are related to education in Palestine, human rights and education, the right to education and children’s rights as well as policy documents and strategic plans, recent annual reports in addition to school curricula. These documents were used as part of the literature review and as an indication of the status of education, human rights, HRE and children’s rights in Palestine. These documents lead me to the realisation that there are substantial gaps in education research in Palestine, particularly in relation to HRE where qualitative critical research does not exist. The documents also provided a clearer direction to my research and acted as a source of sensitising concepts (Blumer
1954) that supported my thematic analysis of the data generated in the field.

While the review of the content of the documents was thorough, my intention was not to conduct a systematic analysis of these documents. The interpretation of the content, either text or photos/graphics, aimed to support the thematic analysis of the primary data generated in the field through conducting individual and group interviews as well as classroom and whole school observations. The three analysis chapters (5), (6) and (7) include clear examples of how the text and photos/graphics in school curricula as well as text from MOE strategy and policy documents were used to support the main findings based on the thematic analysis of the primary data.

4.2.5. Triangulation

Triangulation is usually tied to validation of data. This notion can be criticised as being positivist in nature and aim (Silverman 1985). In my research, I refer to triangulation as the ongoing critical process that allows for comparing data from different data sources and participants about the same phenomenon, not only to have a trusted set of information that reflects the reality on the ground, but also to add depth to the description of the social meaning involved within the data and in the setting/context. Being a human rights activist and practitioner, I would refer to this process as verification.

In my research, I used a number of ethnographic methods; individual interviews, group interviews and classroom observations to generate data. I also employed context observation and reviewed documentation to verify the data provided. Triangulation was done in some instances while in the field not only by me, but also induced and encouraged by the research participants, an act that was not expected. In one of my interviews with a school counsellor, he highlighted that the teachers have no skills in classroom management. Children who are perceived to be problematic are beaten and kicked out of the classroom immediately. After he said this, he looked at me intently and said: come with me. He stood up, opened the door and walked along with me in all the corridors of the three floors school to show me that outside of every classroom there was at least three students who were punished for misbehaving during the class, by being beaten (I saw their red
palms, back of their necks and legs) and ordered to spend the rest of the class outside of the classroom in the corridor. The data provided by the counsellor was instantly verified by observation. This led me to add questions to my individual and group interviews related to teachers’ management of the classroom and corporal punishment.

4.3. Ethical Considerations
This research is primarily guided by the research ethics guidelines established by the British Educational Research Association (BERA 2011) and was approved by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the Institute of Education (IOE). As the research is tightly linked to human rights issues and as a human rights activist and researcher, this research also follows the ethical considerations stated within the ethical code for researchers at Amnesty International (2010). I selected Amnesty International’s ethical code because I have worked with Amnesty for a number of years and I am familiar with this code of ethics and have followed it during my work. A human rights perspective informed my methodology. This is most prominent within the ethical considerations. A clear example is the issue of informed consent where its purpose changed from being a procedural necessity to serving a human rights aim. A number of examples that highlight this point are included under sub-section (4.3.1.3) below.

This section is divided into two sub-sections: firstly, it discusses common ethical considerations in relation to access, anonymity and informed consent, data protection and vulnerability and harm. The second section aims to highlight ethical issues related to and determined by my connection to the Palestinian context; my positionality.

4.3.1. General Ethical Considerations

4.3.1.1. Access
My research is overt, so access to schools and institutions and interviewing the various participants needed prior arrangements and approvals. I always carried a letter from my supervisor and the information sheet about my research (Appendix 2) to present to my research participants. Copies of these two documents were provided to the research participants as well. As mentioned earlier, in both field
research phases, there were no significant problems that hindered my access to any research participants.

Access to schools was easier than I expected. Prior to my visits I had two issues in mind that might have hindered accessing schools and youth centers, namely: the security situation and MOE’s bureaucratic procedures. The security situation was relatively good in both phases, no clashes took place near or at any checkpoints I crossed and no closures were imposed. I made sure that I would travel to the participants in their schools and places of work to spare them any hardship and travel costs.

MOE was open and flexible, they granted me access to schools and provided all the information that I needed. When I reached the schools, I introduced myself and explained my research in detail. I presented an information sheet about my research and the informed consent form (appendix 8). Teachers and students had the chance to read the information sheet and the majority of them signed the informed consent forms, I reiterated the information included in these documents verbally. I made it clear to all participants that they were free to opt-out of the interviews at any time, and if they decided to stop the interview at any point or leave the room during the workshop they were free to do so. All the information was provided in both Arabic and English. The welcoming atmosphere was a pleasant surprise; I did not expect it considering the nature of my research, which might have been considered intrusive, and I thought the consent forms would raise discomfort. In general, all the participants I interviewed were welcoming and highly interested in my research.

Another issue that is particular to conducting research in schools in the Occupied West Bank is the extensive loss of schooling days. When access to school was negotiated this issue was considered. In the Occupied West Bank, school time is precious. Closures and curfews negatively affect the schooling days and frequent teachers’ strikes, while completely legitimate, rightful and understandable, do add to the loss of schooling days. To ensure that my research did not negatively affect the schooling day and use up students’ and teachers’ precious time, I took precautions to ensure that teacher interviews and students group interviews were scheduled in advance to avoid interrupting timetables. None of the sessions took
place during breaks or physical education classes.

4.3.1.2. Anonymity
Students, teachers, MOE officials and the majority of NGO workers are not used to academic ethnographic research and were not aware of the ethical procedures related to anonymity. Prior to conducting the pilot research, I did not think critically of the ethical standards and procedures, particularly the issue of anonymity when conducting ethnographic research in small communities. However, once I was in the field I realised that anonymity is challenging, especially when research is conducted in a small community where people are tightly connected to each other. In a small community there is usually a tightly networked society where people can easily identify each other and hence the possibility of exposure is high (Moosa 2013). When a researcher is working in a school this quickly becomes public knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, a number of my research participants were introduced to me through other contacts, colleagues, and sometimes friends. This meant that in a community where people know each other, gaining access to institutions, people and schools through a network of people is likely to expose the identity of those participating in the research as well as the research sites. ‘Those who introduced … would be aware that I was conducting research there and perhaps many others in the community would have the same information spread in a snowballing fashion along the line of acquaintances’ (Moosa 2013, p.490). In addition to this, disguising the research site is an important goal of anonymising data and this is related to the fact that identification of the research site may reveal sensitive information about participants (Clark 2006). Based on this, including details in my research about the localities could be considered problematic, yet without these details the study would have been stripped of some of its important content (Moosa 2013). As mentioned under the sampling section (4.2.1.), where the characteristics of the geographical areas and school locations play a key role in my research, I have kept the real names of these areas.

To be able to overcome the anonymity dilemma, I negotiated with the participants and decided to adopt a flexible approach that would not harm them and would
respect their privacy without jeopardising the quality of the research. I have omitted all of the participants’ names but kept the names of the geographical areas, noting that the schools can be easily identified. The participants were aware that their schools and youth center were identified in my research and they were fine with that. They were informed that their names would not be included in the research so that they could not be identified as individuals. Similarly, the academics I met at Birzeit University and Al Najah University are aware of the fact that the university as well as their departments were identified and that their names will be omitted.

This concern or dilemma also relates to institutions included in this research. With some institutions complete anonymity is not possible as some of them are unique such as UNICEF, UNESCO, the human rights national institution and even the MOE. The individuals interviewed in these institutions were informed that their anonymity would be protected to the greatest extent possible, by omitting their names and positions, but it was made unambiguously clear that this could not be effectively guaranteed in all cases.

4.3.1.3. Informed Consent

The issue of consent forms was raised under three sections above: group interviews, classroom observations and access. Following the BERA guidelines (2011), informed consent was considered during the two phases of field research, and during the follow up interviews to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway (BERA 2011). I distributed information sheets which introduced the researcher, the IOE and explained the nature and purpose of the research, methodology and expected outputs, along with the consent forms. Both the information sheets and consent forms were distributed in both English and Arabic (depending on the preference of the participants), and I adopted the language of the consent forms and the information sheets to fit the background of the participants, professional and academic status as well as their age group. Both the information sheet and the consent form stated the research process and the importance of the participants’ engagement. Also, both documents explained how the data the participants provided would be used and how and to whom it
would be reported. A sample information sheet and consent form can be found in appendices (3) and (8) respectively.

For my research, I perceived the issue of informed consent from a human rights perspective rather than from a procedural necessity. The principle of informed, voluntary consent serves and protects the participants’ right to freedom of expressions and choice and self-determination, equality, autonomy, privacy and dignity. Informed consent also has the potential to provide participants with a sense of agency and empowerment; participants are given the space to discuss the details of the research with the researcher before agreeing to sign the informed consent and might question certain aspects. It also gives the participants the right to refuse participation or the withdrawal from the research at any point, thus informed consent implies informed refusal (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992).

BERA ethical guidelines that are based on the UNCRC requires researchers to comply with article 12 of the UNCRC which states that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be facilitated to give fully informed consent. Students told me that they were surprised that I asked them to sign the informed consent prior to observing their classes and interviewing them, they said that they expected their teachers to instruct them to talk to me without questioning. The fact that I asked them as well as their teachers and head teachers to adhere to the same standard was a pleasant surprise to them as they told me. This feeling led one of the students to approach me after one of the group interviews and ask me not to include the data he provided in my research. However, the students were not given this chance in one of the schools as the head teacher insisted that her and the teacher’s signature were enough.

Another incident that showed the value of informed consent from a human rights perspective was during my pilot research, when I conducted a group interview with six female students and two of their teachers. Once I explained my research, gave the information sheets and asked the participants to sign the consent forms, the students immediately reached for their pens and were about to sign, when
one of their teachers asked them to read the consent form thoroughly and ask any questions before they sign and agree to anything. The teacher said:

‘Read before you sign and feel free to ask Mai any questions, this form is for your own protection’.

During the two phases of the field research I realised that I needed to be flexible when asking for informed consent. Some participants refused to give their consent before the interview but they agreed to sign the form after. Other participants were more comfortable with giving their consent verbally, which was recorded. Two participants did not give their consent and asked that they read some of my work, a research output, before they gave their consent - according to them, they wanted to check how the data would be used.

With informed consent, issues of power relations and changes in behaviours and attitudes might arise. I did not feel that the practice of informed consent impacted my research participants significantly, considering the fact that I spent many days in the schools where any change in attitudes and behaviours would not be sustained for a long time. Changes in teachers’, head teachers’ and students’ attitudes and behaviours were recorded in the field notes regularly.

4.3.1.4. Data Protection

Considering the volatile security situation and the risk of information being misused by the Occupation bodies (Army, security personnel, border police…) if by any chance they gained access to the data, maximum caution was considered to keep the data secure. During the field research, the data was accessible only to myself. During the writing-up and analysis, my supervisor had access to parts of the data. Prior to leaving the research location and when leaving the Occupied West Bank, having to cross Israeli checkpoints, all necessary measures were taken to ensure data was not accessible or misused. Data was uploaded to the IOE personal folder; physical records (notes, recordings, etc.) were carried on my person, and contact information erased from mobile and computer devices.
4.3.1.5. Harm and Vulnerability

Many ethnographers insist on the importance of trying to ensure that the knowledge they produce by research is used for good (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Aside from knowledge production, the impact of ethnographic research is difficult to measure and can go either way, particularly in highly contested and political contexts like in the case of the Occupied West Bank. I am aware of the fact that this research can be refuted and criticised by the MOE for its critical view of the education system particularly in the Occupied West Bank, it can also be used as a supporting document for those criticising the MOE’s work and the Palestinian education system as a whole. However, adopting critical constructivism allows me not only to analyse the situation but also to propose an emancipatory vision for HRE and education in Palestine in general. In addition to that, I believe that the value of knowledge, particularly that produced by an indigenous researcher, and the public right to know, outweighs such considerations.

The issue that is of real concern is the protection of the children who I worked with and their well-being. BERA ethical guidelines requires researchers to comply with articles (3) of the UNCRC which requires that in all actions concerning children, the best interest of the child must be a primary consideration. During my interviews with the students I recognised that the students might experience distress or discomfort when having to relive certain experiences during the interviews, I made sure to take all necessary steps to reduce that sense of intrusion by giving them the choice to stop the interview, leave or withdraw their data at any time. I continuously observed their body language for any signs of distress and provided them with a comfortable safe space to be able to talk freely without the supervision of any other adults when possible. Male students in one of the schools where the levels of violence were high reassured me that they were better off talking to me than being in the classroom with their teacher. They asked me for extra time to vent and talk about their problems in a safe space where they were allowed to move freely, speak their mind and laugh whenever they felt like it.
Finally, BERA guidelines require researchers who conduct overseas research that involves children to comply with the child protection clearance procedures of the UK. This UK-style protection clearance is not available in Palestine. However, the letter that was provided by the MOE stated clearly that all the activities I planned to conduct in the schools should keep the well-being and safety of the children as the main priority. MOE letter in appendix (9).

4.3.3. Ethical Considerations Particular to the Palestinian Context
The complexity and sensitivity of the Palestinian context posed additional ethical issues. This particularity needs to be considered and tackled by ethnographic researchers and mainly those adopting a critical approach. These issues are determined by the political nature of any work done in the country. A research project in a different context might be considered and perceived as solely academic, while in Palestine the borders blur between academic research and activism. In this section, I will discuss a particular ethical issue related to my positionality as an indigenous researcher located, physically, academically and consciously, between Palestine and the UK. This positionality creates a tension between indigenous knowledge and what might be considered a western colonial research agenda.

4.3.3.1. Positionality in Relation to Data collection and Analysis
Critical constructivists assert that understanding the positioning of the researcher in the social web of reality is essential to the production of rigorous and textual knowledge. Overlooking this understanding, scholars will have a thin and distorted conception of the research process and the data it produces (Kincheloe 2005). Having adopted critical constructivism as the paradigm for this research, I was aware of my positionality within the different communities I was conducting the research in. The aim throughout the research was to maintain a more or less marginal position. Not in the sense of being detached from the context but in a way where I was able to provide access to participant perspectives but at the same time minimise the dangers of over-rapport (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007) during both data generation and analysis phases.
By holding this position, the researcher can generate creative insight by being a simultaneous insider-outsider (Lofland & Lofland 2006). The researcher needs to be intellectually poised between familiarity and strangeness; and so become a marginal native (Freilich 1970). As a critical ethnographer, I was aware of my attachment to the context and familiarity with it, and so took the reflexive measures stated in chapter (3) section (5). I tried to avoid the danger of over–rapport and was aware of the importance of making the familiar strange, not only during the data generation process but also during data analysis.

Considering the diversity within Palestinian society as well as the diversity of the locations and positions of the research participants, I was considered an insider in some contexts and an outsider in others. When interviewing academics and NGO professionals I was considered an insider for example. In schools I was considered an insider as a Palestinian but an outsider as a researcher who does not belong to the sub-community of the school. This insider-outsider situation was sometimes determined by personal ascribed characteristics. I realised that age, gender and language had the most visible impact. For example, being a young female gave me easier access to schools and students, even male schools. Another example is the use of language. The use of different dialects in an area can represent a varied social status for individuals. Accents can reflect an area’s inner conflict with classifications and authority within a population (Bourdieu & Thompson 1991). Hence, my accent was considered a sign or a symbol that transformed language into an agency of power and therefore, although I am a Palestinian, I was in some cases considered an outsider, according to the research participants, as I belonged to a different socio-economic class.

The defamiliarisation process was most challenging during the data analysis and interpretation process. During this phase I needed to distance myself from the taken for granted aspect of what I saw in the field to allow for a critical view and understanding. As a critical ethnographer I looked for the nonliteral meanings of the data texts. I aimed to decode the symbols of culture, which for me might not have been unfamiliar as an insider, to realise asymmetrical power relations, constraining ideology, beliefs, norms, and other forces that unequally distribute social environs (Thomas 1993). To appreciate difference means to disrupt
common sense and place unfamiliar objects in a new context. ‘When this is done successfully, we are rewarded with insights into the culture of study that prompt us to think about our own culture in new ways by searching for analogous concepts that make the alien culture seem more familiar and our own culture seem more alien’ (ibid, p.66).

In many cases the data revealed a reality and a view of my own society that was not to my liking. However, the only method that allowed me to distance myself and be able to make meaning of the data with minimal subjective judgment and rejection was to listen closely to the data. To do otherwise would have been not only bad science, but intellectually dishonest and unethical (ibid 1993).

4.4. Data Analysis and Analytical Framework

The framework I adopted to analyse the data is simple and depends on the three research questions in terms of sequence and level of complexity. This framework informed the structure of the research results, particularly chapters (5), (6) and (7). I adopted a thematic analysis method within the context of critical ethnography and critical theory. This meant that I moved beyond the level of thematic analysis for explanation into a higher level of linking themes to the social, political and cultural context to emphasise the participants’ voices and challenge the existing structures that embody and enhance injustice, discrimination and subjugation. By developing categories and themes to make sense of the data, the focus was on actions, the meanings that underpin or infuse them, and the wider situations that these actions both responded to and shaped. All of these different aspects are intimately related (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). Based on this analysis, through the research results I propose alternatives for policy change and prevailing praxis.

My data analysis, primarily an iterative process, depends on emerging ideas, and since this research is multi-disciplinary, the ideas emerging from the data link to, build on and cross a number of theories and theoretical frameworks. ‘When one set of theories does not exhaust the potentiality of the data, other sets can be employed to point to and explain the facts which remain unexplained. Thus, for any initial statement of the field problem a whole series of theories may be successively applied’ (Bensman &Vidich 1960, p.165). My analysis is not purely
inductive, as I have started from the literature and practice of HRE. For example, the concepts of education for, through and about human rights framed my classroom observations where there was also an element linked to the analysis. This analytical approach and process meant that I moved back and forth between data, literature and theory (Mills & Morton 2013) and it was led by the three research questions.

The researcher's role is to go between the two key questions ‘What are the data telling me?’ and ‘What do I want to know?’ (Srivastava & Hopwood 2009). The process for analysing ethnographic data is both recursive and iterative; beginning as soon as the researcher enters the field until the entire project is completely written (LeCompte & Schensul 1999). Formally, the data analysis process starts to take shape in analytic notes and memoranda; informally, it is embodied in the ethnographer’s ideas and hunches (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007). By writing field research journal entries and weekly memos, I was able to think through and with the data, make links and highlight themes that loomed during the field research or were predetermined by ideas within the literature and research questions. This was the initial phase of analysis which started organically. With changes in the context, particularly in the political conditions, and learning to observe the context with a gender and power struggles lens, I was able to read the data in different lights as the research moved forward. The second phase of analysis started during data management and transcription. While managing the whole corpus of the data and categorising it according to the type of interviewees (student, teacher, head teacher, MOE official etc.), type of interview (individual or group) or type of data (primary or secondary), I was able to identify themes and categories for further investigation and analysis with potential links to other sets of data and themes. The transcription process was critical as through it I was able to re-live parts of the fieldwork experience and think deeply about issues such as language and terminology used by the participants, the context and location of the interview, gender balance in terms of participation and engaging with the interview, power relations, barriers to the flow of the interviews, disruptions and gaps in the data.
My data analysis method is influenced by various qualitative analysis approaches, particularly grounded theorising and thematic analysis. Considering the multidisciplinarity nature of this research, this amalgamation of analysis methods was adopted to capture the depth and complex nature of the data. In today’s climate of blurred disciplinary genres, it is not uncommon to find researchers using multiple methods for data analysis, a key aspect in an evolving criticality. The blurred genres are not an excuse to be wantonly eclectic in our treatment of the critical tradition but to make the point that any attempts to delineate critical theory as discrete schools of analysis will fail to capture the evolving hybridity endemic to contemporary critical analysis (Kincheloe et al 2011). The various analysis techniques such as coding, comparing and memo-ing can be reinterpreted and used in ways that work for individual researchers (Mills & Morton 2013).

In order to maintain a high level of emersion with my data and avoid complications related to Arabic language when using Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), I completed the data analysis manually. A sample of the analysis process is in appendix (10).

4.5. Conclusion
This chapter explains in detail the way in which critical ethnography methods and thematic data analysis were designed and implemented to answer the three research questions. With the particularity of the context this research was conducted in, this chapter explains how both phases of the fieldwork were planned with a view of being able to change and adapt to the possible conditions. Here I have attempted to contribute to using available critical research theory and methods in a way that develops culturally appropriate and localised research approaches. Through detailed documentation of the research methodology I aimed to challenge the traditional and conventional discourse that shapes academic research and characterises much existing literature on HRE particularly in Palestine.
The ethics section is detailed in this chapter, again due to the sensitivity of the context where this research took place and the close links between the researcher, research participants and the social political context. With a particular focus on ethical issues related to research in Palestine and with Palestinians I aspire that research will accurately and respectfully present indigenous knowledge, epistemologies and worldviews (Gilmore 2002) and most importantly never lose sight of the fact that this research is a small contribution to the larger movement working towards the decolonisation of Palestine. The issues surrounding decolonising research on Palestine and the production of indigenous knowledge were highlighted and discussed in detail in chapter (3).

The chapter ends with the analytical framework which depends on the research questions in their sequence, overarching themes and levels of complexity. The research questions and therefore the analysis moves from the general to the particular, from explaining to critically engaging and analysing, representing and leading the general structure of this research.

The next chapter is the first of the analysis chapters, where I attempt to answer the first research question: What are the sources of influence that shape HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank?
Chapter (5)
Sources of Influence Shaping HRE in PA Schools in the Occupied West Bank

5.1. Introduction
This is the first of three analysis chapters. In this chapter I aim to answer the first research question:

*What are the sources of influence that shape HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank?*

To answer this question, keeping in mind the definition of HRE contextualised for the Occupied West Bank as stated in chapter (2), I started by reviewing literature related to Palestinian education philosophies(s) and vision(s) created by Palestinian intellectuals, educationalists and academics under the Ottoman and British Occupations. I also analysed the PLO education department strategy of 1972 to examine the presence and use of human rights language. In this analysis I am concerned with the education *about* and *for* human rights aspects of the HRE definition.

I then examined the comprehensive plan for the development of the first Palestinian curriculum for general education in 1996, as well as the second and third MOE strategic plans during 2008-2012 and 2014-2019 respectively. This review aimed to trace the inclusion of human rights in general and HRE in particular in Palestinian education, particularly in the Occupied West Bank. It also examined how HRE evolved within a particular and peculiar context, and linked values in these documents with the struggle for liberation and social change. I also analysed current civics textbooks.

In my field research, I conducted classroom observations during civics classes. In these observations I focused on two aspects: first, teaching and learning methods used in HRE pedagogy that supported critical thinking, participatory and student-centred approaches. Secondly, I observed human rights-related school projects, and extra curricular activities provided in schools by Palestinian NGOs and
INGOs in cooperation with the MOE. This is where the education through human rights aspect was examined.

During both phases of my field research, some of the questions for research participants in individual and group interviews focused on the reasons behind integrating human rights into the Palestinian education system and curricula post-1994. The participants were also asked about the way human rights was presented in textbooks and during civics education lessons (See appendix (3) for interview and focus group questions). Research participants’ answers varied between a formal uncritical line mainly by MOE officials and a critical, sometimes cynical, perspective from academics, representatives of Palestinian NGOs, activists, teachers and students.

Data generated in the field and from various documents were thematically analysed, as described in chapter (4) section 4.4. The main themes that emerged from the data were: Palestinian educational vision, external politics and donors’ agendas, internal politics, and religion and culture.

5.2. An Evolving Vision: A Confused Palestinian Education Utopia

Over the years, numerous visions for Palestinian education, or what I called in chapter (1) the Palestinian Education Utopia, emerged. They were envisioned both inside Palestine and in exile. The vision(s) of the Palestinian education system evolved alongside the ever-changing political, economic, social and cultural contexts. However, certain elements within these visions remained constant, such as: nationalism, the struggle for liberation, Pan-Arabism, values of humanism and solidarity.

Before the creation of the MOE, the Palestinian education vision and philosophy reflected its origins in the struggle and concern for equality, social justice, liberation and solidarity. After the creation of MOE there was a clear reference to human rights in the textbooks particularly civics textbooks, and sometimes mentioned in policy documents and strategies. But the purpose of the embodiment of such values differed in both cases. Human rights pre-MOE were
included and practiced as part of the Palestinian struggle against colonialism. They were employed in the context of encouraging positive change within Palestinian society. In the post-MOE period there was an amalgamation of unclear aims of human rights within education. This lack of clarity is influenced by the role of external and internal politics and politically induced donor agendas, religion and culture. These aspects will be discussed in detail in the sections of this chapter.

5.2.1. Human Rights in Education and the Struggle for Liberation

Palestinian educators who lived under both the Ottoman Empire and the British Mandate realised the importance of instilling values in education to serve the cause of liberation and to form national identity. Khalil al- Sakakini in his diaries (1907-1952) said:

‘We need schools that will implant in the students’ minds and spirits freedom, nobility, self-respect, courage, integrity, trustworthiness, and the other values essential to freeing each generation from the ignorance, indolence and subservience in which it has languished for generations’ (Sakakini n.d cited in Moed 2014).

Education at that time was framed within the struggle against colonialism, the need for social change, and ending the despotism of Arab leadership. Education was contextualised within the geo-political context and aimed to increase nationalism and national pride as a priority. In spite of the heavy focus on nationalism, education was focused on the rights of participation, freedom, and solidarity.

The end of the British mandate was followed by the Israeli colonial occupation, the Jordanian and Egyptian control over the West Bank and Gaza from 1948 to 1967 respectively (details on Palestinian education under Israeli Occupation in Chapter (1), and the Israeli occupation from 1967 until present date. From 1948 to 1994, while not having control over the education system, Palestinian academics, intellectuals and educators living in Palestine and in diaspora produced a vision of education ready for the moment of liberation. An important document was produced by the education planning department of the PLO in 1972 entitled: The Philosophy for Educating Young Arab Palestinians [Falsafat al-
Tarbiya lil-Sha’b al-‘Arabi al-Filastini]. This document set out the vision for Palestinian education and reflected the main values and ideals within the PLO charter of 1968. This was heavily nationalist considering the main aim of the PLO is to liberate Palestine. Three of the articles in the charter are clearly based on human rights. Article (16) states that the liberation of Palestine will prepare the holy land to be a place where the right of worship and belief is protected for all without discrimination based on race, colour, language or religion. Article (17) stresses the importance of solidarity among nations struggling for dignity and liberation. Article (24) states that Palestinians believe in the values of justice, freedom, sovereignty, and self-determination, human dignity and the right for all nations to practice these values. Similar to the PLO charter, the PLO education document of 1972 includes human rights such as: gender equality, eliminating discrimination based on ethnicity and/or religion and solidarity. The PLO 1972 document states that as humans we need to create a human community that rejects exploitation, oppression and poverty. The notion of human community reflects the idea of cosmopolitanism, which is a conception of human beings as a single community in which all have equal entitlement to dignity and to fundamental freedoms (Starkey 2012). Cosmopolitanism is an ideal that ‘combines a commitment to humanist principles and norms, an assumption of human equality, with a recognition of difference, and indeed a celebration of diversity’ (Kaldor 2003, p19). The PLO 1972 document acknowledges that the majority of Palestinians live in the diaspora and encourages learning from the various communities in which Palestinians live. This idea was stressed by both Edward Said and Hanan Ashrawi. Said’s view was that Palestinian suffering had to be detailed in its specificity, but it also had to be framed in terms of its connection with other subjugated peoples (Butler 2014). Ashrawi wrote:

‘The Palestinian people are those whose national experience belongs with that of the Armenians, the Jews, the Irish, the Cypriots, the American blacks, the Poles, the American Indians, at those terrifying frontiers where the existence and disappearance of peoples fade into each other’ (ibid).

The 1972 PLO document did not only focus on the struggle against the colonial occupation but also included aspects of social and political struggle post–liberation by stressing that the state of Palestine, after liberation, should be democratic, where all its citizens are equal without discrimination based on
gender, colour, or religion. This document also included equality between men and women, and acknowledged and highlighted the diversity of Palestinian society.

As argued above, the Palestinian education vision has for a long time included human rights. It was education about and for human rights, directly linked to Palestinian political, cultural and social particularities and the struggles against successive occupations and for social change.

5.2.2. The Struggle for Education as a Human Right

Between 1948 and 1967 the Jordanian education system in the Occupied West Bank paid little attention to Palestinian identity, but allowed the use of Palestinian national symbols. After the Israeli occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the Israeli military administration took over all aspects of life. In terms of education, the curriculum stayed identical to that of Jordan, however, the Israeli occupation censored any reference to Palestinian identity within the Jordanian curriculum.

‘Not that education was better under Jordan! But at least we saw the map of Palestine; we were able to show it to the children river to sea. When Israel occupied the West Bank, we were banned from showing the map, the Palestinian flag … not even the flag! The use of the colours red, green, white and black was criminalized. Students used to hide a small flag up their sleeves like an amulet’ (Civics teacher in Oreef/Nablus)

Under the Israeli occupation, before the creation of the PA, Palestinian teachers did not have access to development opportunities, little funding was available, and the quality of education deteriorated due to neglect (Nicolai 2007). Furthermore, education in the Occupied West Bank deteriorated due to the direct attack against the Palestinian education system and Palestinian institutions by the Occupying authorities during the first Intifada, which started in 1987. During the first Intifada, Palestinians created a genuine mass movement with all Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza involved in various methods of resistance (Andoni 2001). School students and teachers were essential to this mass movement but their involvement left them exposed to repressive measures by the Occupation. Repressive measures against teachers included compulsory retirement, deduction in pay, transfers, detention and torture. Students suffered
detentions, beatings, expulsions, prohibitions from travelling and so on. However, the biggest blow to the education system was the forced closure of all schools and universities and the criminalisation of education for Palestinians (Nicolai 2007).

‘The violent reaction of the occupation against children going to school was unprecedented. It’s as if every child carrying a school bag, to them, was carrying explosives. They detained them, beat them, and broke their bones. The mere action of walking from your home to school was a brave act of resistance. If our children learnt nothing at school, this lesson was more than enough’ (Education NGO worker from Ramallah)

The Israeli occupation implemented punitive measures against Palestinians to deter them from taking part in the resistance. The prolonged closure of schools was one of these measures (Bush & Saltarelli 2000). In the first four years of the first intifada, one-third of school days were lost (Brown 2003). In addition to that, one-tenth of schools were used by the Occupation army as military camps and detention centers during closure periods (Al Zaroo & Hunt 2003).

Due to the direct confrontations between the Occupation and the civilian population in the first Intifada, every aspect of Palestinians’ lives revolved around resisting the Occupation. Education became a tool for resistance. Education was linked to solidarity, liberation, struggle, resistance and identity. The right to education was fulfilled by force, the force of a determined society to defy the Israeli occupation’s efforts to destroy a whole society. At that point education was ‘perhaps the most instrumental of all rights’ (Osler & Starkey 2010, p.75).

‘Going to school during the first Intifada was a heroic act. Our mothers were heroes to have the strength to send us, as children, to school knowing that we might be caught by the Occupation army. We might be hurt by munitions left in the schools by the Israeli army! But for the Palestinian mother education was her child’s way out’ (Female Political Activist from Abu Dis)

During the periods of school closures, education became one of the tools of nationalist struggle. Palestinians started mass popular education, where popular education is defined as: processes aimed at educating vulnerable, marginalized and/or oppressed groups developed outside, or parallel with, school processes
and circuits (Braster et al 2014). Through popular education, which was deemed illegal and a criminal act by the Occupation, Palestinians affirmed their right to education, and battled discrimination. Popular education during the first Intifada was education for human rights.

‘Education is our right! They wanted to deprive us from that right because they knew that by making us illiterate, an uneducated nation, we will lose our worth, our purpose and our identity. We will become a cheap working force to support their economy or maybe we will leave’ (Female teacher from Hebron)

While the closure of schools contributed to a deterioration in the quality of education for the majority of children, and increased drop out rates, it also contributed to creating a young generation that had a margin of freedom to actively participate and act in the public space, and strengthened solidarity among the population.

‘As a child, I stood beside el shabab [young men] on the street and defended my land. Adults at the time resisted with boycotts, demonstrations and so on. We, children, resisted by staying strong, going to school, throwing stones and protecting our culture. We were no less than any other fida’ie [Freedom fighter]’. (Female schoolteacher from Hebron)

Teaching methods used for popular education were improvised, but depended on interactive pedagogy, the materials available in the surrounding environment and connecting the themes and topics to the day-to-day lives of children.

‘My mother was running one of the community schools in our neighborhood in Al Bireh. My father was the arts teacher. He did not only teach us art. Through for example pottery sessions we learnt about the types of sand/earth and we learnt to work together. Classes in the community school were never boring’ (Lecturer, artist and community activist at Birzeit University)

This type of education enshrined values such as equality, solidarity and co-existence within the community.

‘In the neighborhood schools, we were kids from all backgrounds, whoever is close to that school, to wherever the class was taking place that day would join. Poor, refugees, boys, girls…we were also from all grades, there was no segregation by age. There was no segregation by religion’ (Female researcher at Birzeit University)
This enforced change on the traditional education system which depended on centralized, standardized textbooks, tests and rote-learning challenged conservative educators to start afresh (Nicolai 2007). The atmosphere of mass resistance during the first Intifada afforded opportunities for radical change by creating a giant educational laboratory (Mahshi & Bush 1989). Despite the realisation of activist educationalists and teachers of the importance of a radical change in education in Palestine, particularly in the 1990-1995 interim period, this radical change did not materialise as the MOE was created.

The director and founder of a Ramallah-based NGO that focuses on teachers’ training and citizenship education described the situation during that interim period:

‘I was a teacher in 1990 in the North [of the Occupied West Bank]. The Israelis withdrew, as the negotiations with the PLO were ongoing, the PA was not created yet! This situation created a gap, violence prevailed in and around schools. The relationship between students and teachers, teachers amongst themselves, teachers and parents became confused and chaotic. Violence prevailed on the streets. Armed groups were formed under the pretext of national interest and the need to protect neighborhoods, in addition to the absolute lack of rule of law. All that was reflected inside the schools’.

Although he was part of armed groups who committed acts of thuggery, his position as a teacher prevailed. His precarious position as both an educator and a thug enabled him to identify gaps and real needs. He was determined to make a change. He said:

‘As teachers, we realised that HRE might be a way to change this dire situation and restore the positive sentiments and attitudes cultivated through popular/community education that took place in the early Intifada years. If we do not do something about the situation now, a whole generation will be lost, if not more’

The aspiration to restore the positive achievements of the first Intifada and create a model education system in the Occupied West Bank prevailed among a number
of intellectuals, activists and educationalists. Some of them set up NGOs focusing on education and others helped set up the first Palestinian MOE.

In the next section, I will discuss how with the institutionalization of the Palestinian education vision under MOE, the aspirations, mentioned above, materialised differently than envisioned, and the Palestinian Education Utopia was blurred.

5.2.3. Institutionalised HRE within a Confused Vision

With the creation of the MOE and the PCDC, a new vision for Palestinian education transpired. The first official education document produced under the auspices of the PA was the first comprehensive plan for the development of the First Palestinian Curriculum of General Education in 1996 (the PCDC document hereafter). This document was devised by a number of Palestinian experts, with support from UNESCO, as part of the PCDC. Contradictions started occurring in the education vision with the adoption and adaptation of this document by the MOE. These contradictions reflected the conflicting positions of academics and educators, the detachment of a political and civil society elite from the people, and other conflicting forces such as religion, culture, donors’ agendas, and internal and external political context(s).

5.2.3.1. A Shifting Paradigm: From liberation to State-building

The signing of the Oslo Accords in 1993 marked a critical juncture in the modern history of Palestine’s national struggle for liberation and self-determination. One key political implications of the Oslo process is how it altered the nature and structure of the Palestinian national liberation movement, which, for decades, led a fierce anti-colonial struggle. Now it embraces an official strategy of state-building based on the two-state formula (Dana 2015). Subsequently, education has become a conduit through which this formula is transmitted, without any possibility or space for criticality, discussion or dissent.

The PCDC document, particularly the Arabic version, did not contain references to resistance and hardly mentioned the Israeli occupation. This document blames the political and social situation in which Palestinians live on the fact that Palestinians have lived a certain history after the end of the Ottoman Empire
(PCDC 1996), and that Palestinians have lived under non-Palestinian rule (ibid). However, the certain history and the non-Palestinian rule were not specified!

The PCDC document states that Palestinians have now reached almost full control over their education system, and that they are entering a period of self-governance and state-building where education is key to building a modern state and society that can ‘enter the 21st century on equal grounds with other developed nations’ (ibid). I interviewed a female academic and women’s rights activist who was part of the civics curriculum design. She described the sentiment at that time:

‘During that period we had lots of dreams, we thought that we had a state, we will have elections and peace… frankly, during that Oslo period the feelings were unclear but the direction was that we are moving beyond the period of occupation… I was out of the country and came back in 1997 with positive aspirations in mind and heart… in summary we had hope’

These aspirations reflect the misleading euphoria that prevailed during the immediate period post-Oslo, where political and institutional processes were led by political, academic and society figures detached from Palestinian society on the ground (in the OPT, behind the green line or in the diaspora). Said expresses this misleading euphoria and detachment:

‘Now that some of the euphoria has lifted, it is possible to re-examine the Israeli-PLO agreement with the required common sense. What emerges from such scrutiny is a deal that is more flawed and, for most of the Palestinian people, more unfavourably weighted than many had first supposed… What is particularly mystifying is how so many Palestinian leaders and their intellectuals can persist in speaking of the agreement as a “victory” [while] the Israeli “dove” Amos Oz reportedly put it in the course of a BBC interview, “this is the second biggest victory in the history of Zionism” (Said 1993).

This rapid move from the struggle for rights and liberation to a statist paradigm framed education within the new interim period of self-determination, omitting and falsifying the struggle for liberation. The PCDC document presents a post-colonial situation where Palestinians have entered a period of independence and sovereignty, and blames the fragmentation of the Palestinian land and people the on the struggle for liberation. The term liberation used in previous Palestinian
education documents and in practice is substituted by the term independence. This shifts the discourse from being rights-based to being statist.

‘The attempts of the Palestinians to gain their national independence and complete their sovereignty lead to harming their national, geographical and human unity’ (PCDC 1996).

Within the PCDC document there are statements that normalised the colonial reality, reflecting the formal PA position. This created an illusion of independence, where Palestinians living in the OPT were supposed to consider their lives as no different from those in any other independent nation.

‘...The general aims of the education process are not very different from those in any other society’ (ibid).

This was also reflected in the attitudes of those who helped design the curriculum. A female academic who was part of the civics curriculum and design stated:

‘We wanted the curriculum to step out of the notion that we want the students to be good Palestinians where their identity is identified by their role in the struggle’.

The PCDC document briefly mentions the role of education in building national identity, but links it to the need for Palestinians to be able to integrate within a globalised world, and reach a level of productivity that equals that of other nations in the 21st century. This reflects the PA’s adoption of the globalised neoliberal education paradigm that determines a generic, market-oriented role for education regardless of the particular context.

‘The proposed curriculum aims to prepare the student firstly to the needs of the employment market, and links what it [the curriculum] provides with the needs of the local market’. (PCDC 1996)

This shift in paradigm, from the struggle for emancipation and liberation to the confinements of markets and pure market strategy continued over the years in all subsequent MOE strategies and is reflected in textbooks and practices within schools. When I asked a group of 9th grade students in a West Ramallah mixed school about the history of the struggle against the Occupation, one of the male students said:
‘Ya Miss! We don’t know anything about the first Intifada. We hear about the heroism of the people during that period from our parents. We don’t learn about it in school. I feel that there is a gap in our history, in our memory’.

His female colleague continued:

‘I asked the teacher once about the first Intifada, he said: pay attention to your books, stop asking questions [Balki falahtil], maybe one day you will pass! [tjibilnash masayeb] Stop causing trouble’.

Privileged social or ethnic groups [in the case above the political elite] manipulate historical knowledge, which is validated and formalised through teaching, learning and assessment in schools. This process legitimises certain historical narratives while systematically negating [and omitting] the others (Pherali 2015). The last two quotes highlight both the omission of a key period in the history of Palestinian struggle for liberation and rights and the censorship teachers and students face when discussing topics linked to resistance against the Occupation. This will be discussed in sections (5.3) and (5.4).

5.2.3.2. Overlooking Indigenous Knowledge and Experience

In my research, I identify knowledge created by Palestinians, particularly those residing in the geographically fragmented historical Palestine, as indigenous knowledge. In chapter (3), I argued that there is no standardised definition for indigenous knowledge. UNESCO (n.d) defined the term as the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. Semali and Kincheloe (2002) state that indigenous knowledge reflects the dynamic way in which residents of an area come to understand themselves in relationship to their natural environment and how they organize folk knowledge, cultural beliefs and history to enhance their lives. Whether we call it indigenous, local, marginalised or popular culture as Freire referred to it (Morrow 2008), Palestinians created their own ways of knowing and interacting with their violent and peculiar surroundings. The MOE and external forces sidelined this knowledge with the creation of the PA and the appropriation of the Palestinian education vision. This will be discussed in detail in sections (5.3) and (5.4). I chose to highlight this issue in this section to affirm the holistic paradigm of indigenous knowledge and reveal the wealth and
The PCDC document claims that Palestinians never had any control over their education system – neglecting to acknowledge the numerous indigenous initiatives to create a Palestinian education system such as the PLO 1972 document and community-based education during the first Intifada. Therefore the post-MOE education system and philosophy was created without recognition or acknowledgement of the accumulated experiences of Palestinians.

‘When we were putting together the civics curricula, we were lost. It is our first time to create such a curriculum in Palestine. The first of its kind in the whole region perhaps. We had to research and look for experiences from other countries, sometimes these experiences did not relate to us, they did not look like us [ma btishbahna]’. (Female academic and a women’s rights activist).

By ignoring the pre-MOE education experiences and the values embedded in these experiences, for example the contextualisation of human rights within the struggle against colonialism, there was a creation of a new value system and consciousness. This value system was market-oriented, with a decontextualized outlook on politics, culture and society. This invalidated knowledge systems rooted in anti-colonial national liberation, disenfranchising them (Dana 2015).

Currently students and teachers cynically question the purpose of HRE, where human rights concepts are detached from their reality and contradict with their daily experiences, proving useless when put into practice. I observed a lesson in the 9th grade in a village close to the city of Qalqilia in the North of the Occupied West Bank, the lesson was entitled: Child rights are human rights. Although the right to education was stressed in this lesson, the fact that Palestinian children are restricted from enjoying this right primarily by measures imposed by the Occupation was not mentioned. The examples given in the textbook for depriving children of this right were child labour, and the lack of facilities in schools for children with disabilities. After the class, the female students told me that they are required by the Israeli military to go by themselves and apply for a permit that
allows them to cross the gate on their way to school. This causes psychological stress, extreme fear and a loss of sense of safety, exposing them to interrogation by the army. I was told that some girls dropped out of school because their parents were scared to send the girls to the military compound to get their permits. This issue was not mentioned in the textbook, or discussed in the classroom during the child rights lesson.

The attacks on students, teachers and academic institutions by the Israeli occupation have not changed post-Oslo, rather the extent and level of attacks after the start of the second Intifada increased. Schools were bombed, students and teachers were detained, tortured and killed by the Israeli army, and MOE buildings, documents and equipment were destroyed. However, the reaction of the MOE to such attacks, unlike during the first Intifada, was to find coping mechanisms. These included: changing school days to fit around Israeli-imposed curfews, increasing the number of shifts in schools to accommodate children whose schools were destroyed, and re-deploying teachers to schools closer to children’s places of residence to avoid crossing checkpoints. Under extreme and violent conditions, these mechanisms expressed high levels of resilience,
commitment, and professionalism to ensure the continuation of the education process. However, they did not involve the community or challenge the colonizer.

5.2.3.3. Problematic Implementation of a Confused Vision

In section (5.2.3.2) I criticised the PCDC document for a number of reasons: its detachment from the struggle for rights and liberation presenting the political context in the OPT as post-colonial and blaming the fragmentation of the Palestinian land and people on the Palestinian struggle for liberation. In spite of its pitfalls, the PCDC document was praised for its bottom-up approach:

“For the first time in the history of educational planning in the Arab World, the plan emerged from the bottom up following extensive consultations with teachers, students, parents, academics, and members of the business community. Town meetings were held throughout the Palestinian territories to discuss philosophy, approaches and desired outcomes” (Moughrabi 2004, p.8).

The bottom-up approach led to results that reflected reality on the ground and teachers’ concerns. At the time of preparing the PCDC document, teachers raised the following issues:

‘Textbooks do not suit the needs of the Palestinian learners, and do not help in highlighting the Palestinian personality. The curricula are not linked to the local and social environment which the students live in… The teaching methods used are dry, not modern, heavy and text oriented. It is repetitive and does not encourage critical thinking and understanding’ (PCDC 1996).

During my field research almost all of my research participants, including MOE officials, repeated the same problems with the curriculum and pedagogy, even under the new Palestinian curriculum after years of teacher development programmes.
'We have a confused vision for our education; this is clear not only in the content of the civics textbooks but also in the methods used. While in our strategic documents and policies we mention the child-centered methods and linking content to lived experience, you will find that our education system is highly centralised and rigid. It does not allow for teachers to be creative and use interaction methods. Also, we do not have specialised teachers. Any teacher who needs to complete his/her number of classes required a week will be given a civics class... we do not realise the importance of civics education’ (Female academic and gender specialist from Al Najah university).

Within the PCDC document HRE is highlighted and stressed in a particular section entitled: Evaluating Social Sciences Curricula in the West Bank and Gaza. The section analysed social sciences textbooks used at the time, which in the Occupied West Bank were an amalgamation of Jordanian textbooks with Palestinian edits and was labeled as a test version [Tajreebi]. Based on this analysis the proposed vision for future Palestinian social sciences textbooks includes civics education where HRE mainly occurs. This analysis does not include the term HRE; however, it includes concepts and terms such as: democracy, coexistence, peace, diversity, equality and justice.

Social sciences textbooks were criticised in the PCDC document analysis for focusing on raising students in a way that enhanced their acceptance of existing social norms rather than engaging with them critically. They entrenched stereotypical gender roles and deterred negative behaviour rather than celebrating positive behaviour. The focus is mainly on the local and there is an omission of the links between Palestinian and regional and global contexts, essential to creating effective citizenship.

PCDC recognised the criticism and set out to create a new civic education vision for a new social sciences curriculum which focused on the particular Palestinian context, linking it to a global perspective to avoid extreme nationalism and to enhance global citizenship, tolerance and coexistence. The new curriculum sought to focus on civil values rather than religious values. It included the importance of criticality and the meaning of citizenship, and focused on values such as justice, rights, responsibilities, tolerance, participation, pluralism and
democracy. Finally, there was a special focus on the need to teach students about sustainable change mechanisms within their communities.

A number of academics I interviewed stated that this vision was overlooked on the policy and strategy level as well as in textbooks and the practice in schools. For example, regarding stereotypes, a female academic told me, her daughter asked her:

‘Why do we not have any pictures in the civics books of a woman driving, although you are the one who drive us to school every day?’

The MOE stressed the fact that gender equality was upheld in civics textbooks. While a number of pictures in the textbooks show Palestinian men preparing food and working in the kitchen, other pictures include gender stereotypes. For example there is a chapter on the rights of the elderly and solidarity within the community in the 9th grade civics textbook with a drawing of three older men playing chess or reading the newspaper. This picture entrenches the stereotype, that elderly people have no productive role in society and that at a certain age they only spend their time leisurely. This is rare in Palestine where Palestinians rarely retire due to a lack of government support, low retirement wages (if any) and deteriorating economic conditions. Secondly it promotes the stereotype that men spend time socialising while elderly women stay at home.
Another example is in a lesson about the media and public opinion in the 7th grade civics textbook, where a drawing shows a family consisting of a mother, a father and two children reading newspapers. The father is reading about politics, as the page he is reading has the title: the Middle East. The mother is reading about the role of women in Palestinian society and the children are looking at a children’s book. Under the drawing there is a caption that reads: ‘family members reading papers each according to their interests’. The drawing is followed by a question for discussion: ‘What can we conclude from the personal interests of those family members featured in the drawing?’

The drawing and the discussion question cement gender stereotypes about male and female interests, where men are expected to be interested in politics and women are the ones who are interested in women’s issues. See figure 5.3 below.
Pictures and drawings in the textbooks are suggestions for discussion. They might be overlooked by teachers or used to convey a contradictory message to the original intention. This will be discussed in chapter (6).

Unlike the previous education visions, the PCDC document and the subsequent MOE documents were fixated on Palestinians living in the OPT. When the Palestinian diaspora and refugees are mentioned, they are mentioned in the context of the role of the Palestinian education system to unify Palestine’s diverse communities. The PCDC document states that

‘…The Palestinian education system through its curricula has a role in facing the fragmentation and going beyond it to be able to enhance the process of national integration and cultural unity’

(PCDC 1996)

The document overlooks the importance of recognising and utilising the diverse experiences of Palestinian communities to build a democratic, equal, just and diverse culture. It highlights the imposition of one unified culture unlike the PLO 1972 document which highlights the importance of diverse Palestinian cultures and experiences.
In practice MOE strategies and references to human rights in textbooks are contradicted by day-to-day practices in schools. Discriminatory behaviour, marginalisation and inequality based on socio-economic backgrounds and gender stereotyping were evident in a number of schools I visited. When I interviewed a group of students from the 9th grade in the PA mixed school in West Ramallah, the boys in that class were, unlike the girls, disengaged and uninterested. I asked their opinion and the response was: ‘Why should we answer? No one cares’. I asked them why they thought that, and their answer was: ‘Ask the teachers’. When I asked one of their teachers and the head teacher, they said:

‘These kids come to school from a poor background, mainly from the neighboring refugee camp. They are all badly raised and violent, it is not our responsibility to change their behaviour. Better keep them quiet’.

During one of my visits to this school, the head teacher was preparing a formal letter asking the MOE to ban refugee children from enrolling in her school.

On the policy and strategy level, the vision of the Palestinian education system in both the 2008-2012 and 2014-2019 strategic plans overlooks the vision stated in the PCDC document, particularly in relation to HRE. In both strategic plans the vision for the whole education system states:

‘This vision aims to prepare a Palestinian who is proud of his (sic) religion, national identity [Referring to the Pan-Arab Identity], his homeland, and Arab and Islamic culture. A Palestinian who contributes to the building of his society, pursues knowledge and creativity, interacts positively with the requirements of scientific and technological advancement and [is] able to compete on the practical and scientific levels. A Palestinian who is open to different cultures and regional and international markets, able to build a society that is based on gender equality, upholding humanistic and religious tolerance’ (MOE 2008, p.13; MOE 2014, p.16).

This vision is highly nationalistic, but does not link nationalism to the struggle for liberation. It strongly emphasises religious values, assuming that these values are related to the Muslim faith – ignoring diversity within Palestinian society and contradicting its statement about religious tolerance. Therefore it discriminates against religious Palestinian minorities and those who are atheists, agnostics or
other. This discourse was apparent during an interview with an MOE official. When I asked him about Islam as a dominant religion within the education system, he said:

‘We do not discriminate! Anyway, Palestinian Christians are Muslims in their culture’.

This sentence was strongly refuted by a Christian academic, who said:

‘These blanket statements and generalisations help to create rifts within the community where we do feel marginalised and certain values are imposed on us, this is unacceptable particularly in Education where equality, coexistence and acceptance should be core values and main aims of the education process’ (Academic from Birzeit University).

The above vision also highlights the issue of gender equality. When I asked a female academic and a women’s rights activist about the reason behind selecting gender equality to highlight within the vision, she said:

‘Women rights organizations were strong at the time and were able to lobby the civics education teams to highlight gender issues, particularly focusing on women’s rights’.

She continued:

‘With the lack of clear guidance and unified vision, you will find in the textbooks a number of contradictions, where women’s rights are the focus in some sections but gender stereotypes prevail in others or possibly in other subjects taught in school like Arabic language or religion’.

As argued in this section, the Palestinian education vision as it stands is confused and does not have a clear aim or orientation. This confusion is caused by a number of factors, such as the shift in the political paradigm from rights-based to statist, and a fraudulent peace process that is seen by most Palestinians as imposed and not meeting their lowest aspirations. On the contrary, the implications of more than 20 years of this peace process have caused more misery, internal struggle and loss of hope than at any other period during Palestinian history. Within this confusion, human rights discourse in education is considered detached from reality and imposed, just like the peace process. It is seen as a mere element introduced to satisfy a western agenda. The following section will discuss this theme.
5.3. External Politics and Donors’ Agenda

‘Formal education is a key institution through which colonial modes of thinking were produced and reproduced and where postcolonial aspirations could also be worked towards’ (Said n.d cited in Rizvi & Lingard 2006, p.295).

In Palestine, the political aspect of schooling is not only shaped by the colonial occupation and the subsequent fragmentation of the education system, but is also exacerbated by the heavy influence of external politics and donors’ agendas. Palestinians had a vision for education that was framed within nationalist aspirations of liberation and the protection of Palestinian identity long before the assumed post-colonial phase. However, when this vision was institutionalised under the PA, a body restricted by agreements signed with the occupier, this vision shifted, leading to a confused curriculum that did not serve Palestinian aspirations. Additionally, disregarding previous indigenous experiences, such as the educational model practiced during the first Intifada, created a narrative that justified the need for external intervention, both through financial donor support and external interference in the Palestinian education system.

5.3.1. An Attempt to Silence Collective Consciousness

Shortly after the Oslo Accords, large sums of aid were poured into the OPT. These funds are considered to be political rent (Hovsepian 2008) or a peace dividend (Leone 2011). Money was given to the PA in return for silencing the opposition and maintaining the peace process. This was reflected in education where the majority of the content of textbooks was decontextualised and which represented a statist utopia far from the reality of a colonised nation. From donors’ perspectives, Palestinian education, particularly HRE, must not be linked to politics, nor should academic institutions be a source of producing anti-colonial ideology and dissent.


Donors perceive HRE, as shown by the quote above, as a contributor to stabilizing the peace process and creating economic development to cover the reality of the Occupation.
Since their inception, Palestinian schools textbooks have been a major issue in international political debate. Former US President Clinton drew attention to it in his remarks at the Israel Policy Forum in New York in January 2001, when he called on Palestinians to change the ‘culture of violence and incitement that, since Oslo, has continued unchecked’ (Israel Policy Forum 2001). Six months later, Senator Clinton held a press conference where she denounced the ‘hateful, anti-Israel rhetoric in official Palestinian...schoolbooks’ (Zogby 2001).

The principal source of the allegation is a report produced by a Jewish-American NGO called the Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP). The report states:

‘Ever since the PA became responsible for education in 1994, Palestinian children have been learning from their schoolbooks to identify Israel as the evil colonialist enemy who stole their land.... The new PA schoolbooks fail to teach their children to see Israel as a neighbor with whom peaceful relations are expected. They do not teach acceptance of Israel's existence on the national level, nor do they impart tolerance of individual Jews on the personal level’ (Marcus 2000).

The effects of this report were disastrous. In December 2000, faced with strong parliamentary pressure during an election campaign, the Italian government, referring directly to the CMIP study, stated that it could no longer finance the development of the new Palestinian school curriculum. The World Bank notified the MOE that money allocated for school texts and teacher training would be diverted to other projects. This rush to judgment led to similar reactions by a number of other donor countries/bodies (Moughrabi 2001). These allegations were refuted by the MOE and various Palestinian and international academics.

‘The Palestinian curriculum is not a war curriculum; while highly nationalistic, it does not incite hatred, violence, and anti-Semitism. It cannot be described as a ‘peace curriculum’ either, but the charges against it are often wildly exaggerated or inaccurate’ (Brown 2001, p.1).
Palestinians have a great sense of pride in their education system that ceases to crumble under the violent measures of the Occupation, seeing the new curriculum as an improvement from the curricula they used pre-MOE and other curricula used in the region.

‘What I want to tell you is well done to us! [yekhlef a'laina!] We deserve the credit to have been able to produce such high quality curriculum under these circumstances and put Palestine on the front-pages of our textbooks’ (Female researcher at the education department – Birzeit University).

In spite of this sense of pride, having to justify themselves at all times puts Palestinians in a defensive position, particularly having to prove consistently that they are up to the expectations of the Other [the West] and that their work is worthy of the Other’s praise. This not only contributes to the alienation of Palestinian culture, deeming it inferior and in need of constant reassurance, but also creates a feeling of alienation among Palestinians themselves and a rift between learners and teachers and their education system.

The PA understands that it is required under international law to respect, protect, and fulfill human rights. Well before joining the UN conventions in April 2014, the PA symbolically signed conventions such as the UNCRC and CEDAW to express their commitment to human rights. However, to promote human rights particularly through HRE in schools, there needs to be a political climate that supports these principles (Starkey 2015).

‘As long as Israel continues to look for excuses to smoke screen its brutal military occupation, and to deny the Palestinians’ self-determination, freedom, and human rights in violation of international law and all U.N. resolutions, the conflict will continue. Palestinians need peace more than any other nation on earth, but peace must be based on mutual respect and justice for all’ (MOE 2005).

This was confirmed by a deputy head teacher in the South of Nablus boys’ school who said:

‘The biggest and main challenge is the Israeli occupation, their tanks, jeeps, soldiers and settlers are shooting in the streets outside the school as well as attacking the school while teachers are trying to promote human rights and peace in the classroom…The Israeli occupation breeds more hatred and violence than any schoolbook can’.
In spite of the statement by the MOE above, and the sentiments by teachers about the disastrous impact of the Occupation on education, there is a common feeling among activists and some educationalists that the MOE decontextualised and de-politicised HRE. This caused HRE to ring hollow in the face of Israeli violations and students’ and teachers’ experiences. An academic at Birzeit University explained:

‘The attack on the Palestinian new curriculum particularly by the US and Israel was faced by a Palestinian push-back. Many academics, intellectuals, NGOs and the MOE defended the new curriculum. However, the MOE became sensitive to external scrutiny, worried that they will lose funding and support. They started practicing self-censorship to avoid any points of contention’.

5.3.2. The Impact of the Politically-Induced Donor Agenda

PA institutions, including the MOE and Palestinian NGOs working in the fields of human rights and education, became increasingly influenced by the practices and discourses of their funding institutions, and detached from the grassroots and national struggles for liberation (Leone 2011). Academics I interviewed reflected on this particular point. A researcher from Birzeit University said:

‘The inclusion of civics in its current form is an American imposition, MOE introduced it to get the money’.

Donor and international agencies deny their political role. In spite of the prominent role of UNESCO, when I interviewed the education department in their Ramallah office, and asked about the Palestinian curriculum, they stated:

‘Our work is technical and advisory; we do not interfere with the decisions of the MOE in terms of policy, implementation or even the content of the textbooks. We try not to focus too much on the political aspect… too sensitive’.

Similar statements were repeated by a number of INGOs and governmental bodies that support the PA in general, who, just like the PA, are worried about being scrutinised by Israel. For example, CMIP claimed that the European Union (EU) was funding Palestinian textbooks with anti-Semitic content. According to Brown (2002), the EU as a body did not fund any PA school textbooks, some
individual European states provided funding to the PCDC. However, the Israeli wildly inaccurate charges were used to taint even those who were not associated with them. The EU came under steady fire in the press for supporting the books. This has led the EU to declare that:

‘It is a total fabrication that the European Union has funded textbooks with anti-Semitic arguments within them in Palestinian schools. It is a complete lie’ (ibid).

The EU conducted its own review of the textbooks which concluded that

‘Quotations attributed by earlier CMIP reports to the Palestinian textbooks are not found in the new PA schoolbooks funded by some EU Member States; some were traced to the old textbooks that they are replacing, some to other books outside the school curriculum, and others not traced at all. While many of the quotations attributed to the new textbooks by the most recent CMIP report of November 2001 could be confirmed, these have been found to be often badly translated or quoted out of context, thus suggesting an anti-Jewish incitement that the books do not contain… Therefore, allegations against the new textbooks funded by EU members have proven unfounded’ (ibid).

This statement by the EU highlights the inability of such body to fully support the position of the MOE. The EU quote suggests that Palestinians have actually taught hatred, violence and anti-Semitism in previously used school books, or even educational material used after the creation of the MOE but are not part of the funding of the EU. This type of attitude exacerbates the sentiment of cynicism among Palestinians towards the support of donors, hence, the negative and cynical view towards human rights. This aspect will be discussed in detail in chapter (6).

PA institutions, including the MOE, understand the system of punishment and reward they are engaging with in relation to obtaining funding from donors. This is a representation of discursive domestication based on Gramsci’s theory of hegemonic culture. The MOE not only needs donor money but it reacts to unequal power relations by adapting to the oppressive framework and guidelines of so-called ‘modern’ society, disregarding the political context and reality (Leone 2011).
When I reviewed the MOE’s 2008-2012 and 2014-2019 strategic plans, I was surprised by the lack of human rights language in spite of its abundance in civics textbooks. I enquired about this omission by asking a director general at the MOE about the lack of human rights language in the last strategic plan. He was surprised and disturbed with my question and said

‘This is impossible! Check the plan again! There is no way we do not include human rights language in our plans… we use such language to get the money - we trade with this kind of language [mintajer feehom]’.

In an interview with a female academic and women’s rights activist, I asked her about the reason for including the issue of gender equality and women’s rights in the textbooks, she said:

‘Gender sells! The more gender they add in the textbooks, the more appealing it becomes to donors’.

The two quotes above exemplify how HRE, within civics education, caters to the requirements of donors. Donor agencies who fund reconstruction in post-conflict contexts shape the nature of citizenship education with their ideologies (Quaynor 2012). As mentioned earlier, the politicised donor agenda and pressure exercised on the MOE translates into civics textbooks where human rights themes presented and discussed are mostly detached from the political reality and human rights is not seen as a tool for resistance and change. In the 8th and 9th grade civics textbooks the issues of participation, democracy and accountability presented Palestine as an independent state with no colonial control. In the 8th grade civics textbook the first chapter talks about the types of Palestine families stating that:

‘Traditionally Palestinian families are rural with large numbers of family members to care for the land. Due to social and economic reasons Palestinian families are transformed to be smaller in size’.

This statement omits the fact that the traditional farming and rural Palestinian society is being forced to transform due to the land grab and confiscation policies implemented by the Israeli occupation. Furthermore, neo-liberal economic policies imposed by the donor agenda have pushed Palestinian rural families to
move to cities where poverty rates and unemployment are increasing and the formation of shanty towns are on the rise. Social problems linked to the transformation of traditional Palestinian way of life are not discussed in the textbooks.

In the 8th grade civics textbooks, the issue of domestic violence are discussed in and framed within social traditions, culture and Islam. However, there is no mention of the violence inflicted on individuals and/or Palestinian society due to the Israeli occupation or the impact of these measures on the levels and types of violence within Palestinian society.

Human rights are framed in a context in which, if read by an outsider, they would think there was no Occupation. I rarely found any references to the relationship between human rights violations and the Occupation. In the 12th grade Contemporary Issues textbook there is a chapter on international humanitarian law which only mentions Palestine and the Occupation in sentences that include Iraq, Chechnya, Afghanistan and Bosnia. Connecting the Occupation to something distant like wars in other countries prevents students from identifying rights violations committed by the Occupation as part of their everyday reality.

The avoidance of tackling the issues of Occupation and the aspirations for liberation fall under two types of textual silence. First, discreet silences which are defined as ‘those that avoid stating sensitive information’. Second, manipulative silences ‘those that deliberately conceal relevant information from the reader/listener’ (Huckin 2002, p.348). In the context of political rent or discursive domestication as a method to gain international support, the PA in general and the MOE in particular aim to avoid the scrutiny by donors and Israel by omitting relevant but sensitive information.

HRE projects implemented by Palestinian NGOs in schools are tied to the availability of funding and the thematic trends proposed by donors. This leads to a lack of sustainability and a confused vision, affecting the nature of the activities and the audience. A project manager in a youth NGO in Ramallah told me:
‘To get a USAID funding you have to sign a waiver stating that the activities funded by this grant will only benefit ‘good Palestinians’!’. The director of a human rights NGO in Palestine said:

‘HRE work we do in and with schools does not depend on donor funding as that would mean that we will be tied to their frequent change in themes and limited funding. We train students and teachers to document human rights violations, a skill that unfortunately will be needed in Palestine for a long time and contradicts with the preferences of many donors’.

NGOs are aware of intrusive donors’ agendas and their manipulation of PA institutions, civil society, and society as a whole. However, there is another omission even when such organizations link HRE to practice. Students are trained to identify and document human rights violations committed by the Occupation, but PA violations are not mentioned or even considered. This is a manifestation of the increasingly authoritarian nature of the PA.

5.4. Internal Politics
The internal strife that reached its peak in June 2007 between the two major political parties in the OPT, Fatah and Hamas, led to a devastating split between the Occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This negatively affected ordinary Palestinians in terms of access to services and heightened violations of rights by both de facto governments. This human rights violations-filled atmosphere negatively affected education in the OPT. Both governments used HRE to support their factional agendas. In this section I focus mainly on the situation in the Occupied West Bank.
5.4.1. HRE in the Service of the Ruling Party

‘While in principle everyone takes for granted the benefits of HRE, such endeavors can be potentially costly from the perspective of the state. HRE is inherently revolutionary; if implemented effectively, it has the potential to generate social opposition, alongside rising demands for justice and accountability’ (Cardenas 2005, p.364).

One of the main reasons the MOE introduced HRE in the curriculum was to meet international standards and donors’ demands. However, incorporating HRE into a rigid system aborted its revolutionary aspect.

Vision statements and the content of textbooks highlight concepts such as peace, tolerance and co-existence rather than the struggle for the protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights. There is also a strong link between obligations and rights. Through this approach, students are expected to be passive rather than active in demanding their rights, particularly in demanding rights and opposing violations from the PA. Corresponding implementation and local practice can differ greatly from the [revolutionary] vision of HRE initially conceptualised since reforms often go through a process of decoupling and/or adaptation (Meyer & Rowan 1978 cited in Bajaj 2012). In an interview with an MOE official in Ramallah, when I asked him about students’ activism, he said:

‘We want our students to demand their rights, but in a ‘civilised’ way, we do not want trouble makers’.

In another interview with an MOE official in a directorate in the North of the Occupied West Bank, she re-iterated the quote above, she said:

‘Our students live under distressing political conditions; they feel they need to rebel against the Occupation. We want them to understand that in our future state they need to act peacefully, [and] know their obligations to get their rights’.

The MOE highlights the importance of using methods such as marches to demand rights. For example, the cover of the 8th grade civics textbook shows a group of students in a demonstration carrying placards stating: ‘Yes to the rule of law, yes to national unity and yes to the freedom of expression’. However, in
practice students stated that such demands do not concern them and are violated constantly.

‘Ya miss! They tell us that we have the right to the freedom of expression and participation! But they ban student councils. Why do they teach us about democracy and elections then?’ (Male student from the South of Nablus).

When I asked the MOE why student councils are banned, they mentioned that:

‘Student councils might lead to political activism in schools and that might lead to trouble’.

When I asked what type of trouble they anticipated, an MOE official said:

‘Students might group and organize to act violently against the Israeli army, which might lead to their harm, or attacks on the school’.

Students at the boys’ school in the South of Nablus were proud of their resistance against the Occupation. They mentioned that they organise and gather to throw stones at the illegal settlement located opposite their school, built on their village’s stolen land. They do this as a reaction to the human rights violations they experience, with or without a students’ council.

Me: Why do you throw stones at the settlement?
Male student: A’aib ya miss tisa’li! [How dare you ask this question miss!]. If we don’t do that they will take all the land! It is our duty to resist.

The students knew that their stones would not make any difference, they will not hurt anyone or bring back the land that was lost to illegal land grabbing by illegal Jewish settlers. For them it was a sense of commitment to a community, reaffirming their role in the struggle and reclaiming their space and voice by actively participating in their own way.

When I asked these students if they learnt anything about their right to resist in their civics classes, their answer was a definitive no, followed by a striking piece of information:

‘He [the head teacher] has installed surveillance cameras around the school. He said it’s for our protection, but we know they monitor which boys go up to the settlement to throw stones.'
We know that, because every time some of us go up there, the [Palestinian] police come the next day to take them or ask them questions’ (Male student from the South of Nablus).

Surveillance is not only practiced against students. Teachers also feel that they are unable to express their opinion unless it is in line with the MOE/PA official position. An English teacher in a West Ramallah school saw me writing my notes in the break time. He came to me and said:

‘I hear you are doing your research about HRE. How are we expected to teach human rights when all our rights are violated?’

I asked what he meant by that, he said:

‘I was once dismissed for expressing my opinion. I can't risk it any more. Just look around you and you will see for yourself’.

As argued in this section, HRE in PA schools lost its meaning and its activist-oriented edge when it became part of a rigid institution, with a confused vision, tied into a donor agenda and external pressures. Additionally, HRE is used to serve the agenda of a ruling party where students and teachers are punished when they attempt to show any type of dissent and when obligations are put before rights.

In the following section, I will show how HRE is actually used as a pretext to violate human rights in schools, as well as a mechanism for indoctrination.

5.4.2. Political Indoctrination and HRE

The majority of my research participants assured me that political parties had no influence in creating the current curriculum. However, through my field research I have come to conclude that an element of political indoctrination for the benefit of the ruling party is evident. What triggered my curiosity to examine this issue was a statement by a political science lecturer at Birzeit University. She said:

‘In my political science class, first year students have no idea what a one state solution is! I wonder what they study in school! A Palestinian state PA style I guess’.

The civic and/or political engagement encouraged by civics education textbooks and school lessons mainly promotes loyalty to the ruling party, framed within a
nationalist agenda. Brown (2001) stated that the purpose of the new Palestinian curriculum is unabashedly supportive of existing authority. For example, during my field research, two of my scheduled school visits in April 2014 were canceled because the school would be supporting the return of the president Abu Mazen from the US. When I visited the school and I asked the civics teacher and the students about the experience, the civics teacher said:

‘It was great for the students; they practiced first hand political participation. They felt part of our struggle for independence through the PA’s efforts in the UN’.

The students had a different view, one student said:

‘We were happy to miss a school day! It was fun on the way there, we sang on the bus. But when we got to Al Muqataa, we were trapped in the main yard for hours under the sun. We did not know why’.

His friend continued:

‘I wanted to drink water and go to the toilet. The Amen [security] at the gate did not allow us to leave! I peed in the corner anyway... [He laughed]’.

Following this incident, in each school I visited, civics teachers mentioned Abu Mazen’s visit to the UN. They glorified the PA’s efforts on the international level and mentioned that these efforts were part of the struggle for independence, using international law. The students had no chance to comment or raise questions.

During my interviews with teachers and head teachers, I always had the feeling that they were on edge; they never deviated from being politically correct when I asked them about the PA. They rationalised their lack of criticality with the fact that the PA is under attack from the Israelis and it is not the time to be critical. One teacher said:

‘The PA is doing its best allah ye’nhom [god be with them], it’s enough that we, Palestinians have the most democratic country in the region! Which country teaches human rights in schools? Which country allows students to send letters directly to the MOE complaining?’
Teachers, or students who dare to criticise the government can be accused of being unpatriotic, which is a common accusation by the government to its dissidents. The accusation of unpatriotic behavior can intimidate teachers and students into self-censorship.

In schools, a human rights framework and HRE are sometimes used to justify the PA’s oppressive conduct and efforts to indoctrinate students with a particular political ideology that serves the agenda of the ruling party. The enforcement and imposition of this ideology does not resonate with many Palestinians, but students and teachers do not seek alternatives for fear of reparation by the powerful and the dominant group. Their reality is shaped by unequal power relations and the ideas, perspectives, interests, and behaviour of dominant groups and nations through local elites and urban centers (Fasheh 1990). It makes Palestinians, who were once a model of resistance and struggle for justice, passive and voiceless objects following the orders of the ruling authority.

5.5. Religion and Culture
The MOE made progressive steps by integrating human rights within the Palestinian curriculum, particularly in civics textbooks. These textbooks sometimes feature human rights that could challenge dominant cultural practices or social norms, or possibly conservative religious beliefs, particularly in relation to the private sphere. Such examples include: equality between men and women, introducing CEDAW without reservations, the right of children to participate in decision-making within the family, and the prevention of sexual violence.

Political and civil rights are also included, which potentially challenge the existing authoritarian system, addressing issues of corruption, freedom of expression and thought and the right to political participation by organising public demonstrations. During group interviews with female students, a number of these issues were highlighted as priorities, particularly women’s rights related to employment, participation in political and social life, early marriage and the right to inheritance. Male students highlighted the importance of protection from physical violence and freedom of expression. I noticed that students had a good level of understanding of human rights, particularly when this understanding stemmed from personal experience of the violation of those rights. However, they saw some rights as
being detached from reality, or being westernised and not suited for Palestinian culture and Islam.

Civics teachers adopted a number of mechanisms to overcome the alleged westernisation of the curriculum, making it relate more to the dominant religion and social norms or culture. However, these efforts did not lead to an alignment between the content of the textbooks and the lived experiences of the students, or between the vision of education as a whole and the aspiration of the Palestinian people for liberation. Their efforts did not challenge stereotypes or tackle violations experienced by the students within their own communities or by the Occupation, or encourage change within society. Rather, they cemented a rigid understanding of religion, particularly Islam, and existing authoritarian, hierarchal and patriarchal culture and social norms.

5.5.1. Vernacularization: Islam and Pan-Arabism

Pan-Arabism, Arab Nationalism or Arabism are used interchangeably (Anderson 2002). The term(s) can be summarised as the idea that the Arabs are a people linked by special bonds of language and history (many would add religion), and their political organisation should in some way reflect this reality (Al Khalidi 1991).

Islam and Pan-Arabism are linked together in the textbooks and in participants’ expressions. A number of participants said: human rights that are against our Arab and Islamic culture and identity are not acceptable. This rhetoric, either within MOE strategies, textbooks or as noted during interviews was not present in the pre-MOE education vision. When the Palestinian curriculum was first envisioned by Palestinian educationalists under the PLO in the early 1970s, religion was not featured. Palestinian identity was based on nationalist and Pan-Arab values. Even the 1996 Comprehensive Plan called for secular, nationalist education. However, once the MOE took over, the agenda changed. The change was due to a number of factors, one of which was the rise of political Islam in Palestine and the region and the influence of this development on cultural and social aspects in Arab societies. With the rise of political Islam and the power of Hamas, the Islamist party, the agenda of the PA changed to mainstream Islam in all topics to gain support from the grassroots where Islam overshadowed nationalist sentiments.
‘When we were putting together the first comprehensive plan for the Palestinian education system in 1996, we envisioned a secular education. Unfortunately, in practice, education as a sector was always used as a bargaining chip. It is used for political gain, the Islamists know the power of education in creating social change, and other political parties do not care about education… So Islam was not only taught as a separate topic but also the values of Islam were mainstreamed in all other topics including civics’ (Director of the education development department in an NGO – Ramallah).

In the textbooks I reviewed, references from the Palestinian legal system, international human rights law and Palestinian proverbs were used to support human rights values, however Islam is presented as the primary source for human rights and is integrated in the majority of the human rights lessons. In the 12th grade Contemporary Issues textbook, chapter 6, lesson 2 entitled Human Rights starts by stating that human rights are inherent to all human beings who were created by Allah. Also it states that human rights identified by Islam are more suitable as they are stated by Allah who created humans.

In the majority of human rights-related lessons, there are examples where human rights are presented as an integral part of Islam, its texts and teachings with no space or opportunity for criticality or discussion. This is illustrated by the use of the Qura’an, Hadith [teachings of Prophet Mohamed] or sayings and teaching of Al Sahaba [Prophet Mohamed’s companions]. For example the 7th grade civics textbook, chapter 1, lesson 3 focuses on justice and freedom. The lesson starts with a verse from the Qura’an:

‘And whenever you judge between people, to judge with justice’
(Qura’an 4:58).

This verse from the Qura’an is followed with a saying by Umar Bin Al Khattab, one of prophet Mohamed’s Sahaba:

‘When did you enslave people although they are born free?’.

The majority of students interviewed reiterated the idea that human rights can only be accepted and fulfilled in Palestinian society which complied with Islamic values. A female student in one of the focus groups in West Ramallah said:
‘We believe in human rights as long as they are in-line with our religion [Islam]. Islam is higher than any other human created values, it is what Allah gifted us with’.

This rhetoric is also used by the MOE. One of the officials I interviewed said:

‘By analysing religious references I found that human rights are presented in a better way than in international documents’.

Teachers reinforce this interpretation of human rights and highlight the superiority of Islam by using examples of how Islam includes human rights values and respects and protects these values. For example, in a class on women’s rights in one of the girls’ schools in Hebron, the teacher said:

‘Islam ensures the rights of women better than any other value system. Islam ensures that a Muslim women is treated as a queen in her house’.

This quote demonstrates how a certain understanding of religion or human rights values by teachers can exacerbate stereotypes rather than create change, hindering the creation of a space that critically engages with either value system.

Islamic references are used to make human rights closer to the dominant culture and manage some of the skepticism and disbelief in the human rights system as a whole. It could also be seen as a method to protect Palestinian Islamic identity as mentioned by some of my research participants. Without allowing for balanced critical engagement with both value systems, HRE in PA schools is encouraging the complete omission of the existence and importance of human rights as a universal concept as well as other religions and belief systems within Palestinian society and omits elements of diversity and equality.

In addition to the dominance of Islam, the PA textbooks still promote the Arab-nationalism mantra that Arabs are unified by their language, religion and history which was popular during the 1950s and 1960s as Arab countries were gaining independence from colonialism. This shows a lack of vision and disregards the major changes that are happening in the region in terms of increased calls for the acknowledgement of diversity, the inclusion of minorities and equal representation.
Finally, there was no attempt within the textbooks to bring universal human rights values closer to Palestinian revolutionary culture and the struggle for liberation by using examples of how human rights played and plays a role in nations’ emancipation or how those who struggled for freedom around the world or even in Palestine use human rights as a language and a tool to achieve their aims. HRE and the struggle for liberation and social change will be discussed in chapter (7).

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I reviewed the main factors that contributed to the integration of human rights and HRE within Palestinian education. I critically examined the elements that shaped HRE within PA schools in the Occupied West Bank using data generated in the field through ethnographic methods, as well as an analysis of civics textbooks, MOE strategies and historical education-related documents.

Through this analysis and a critical engagement with various documents, a number of themes emerged. The Palestinian education vision was the first to be highlighted as a major factor that inspired the integration of human rights and consequently HRE within the Palestinian education system. Before the creation of the MOE, human rights were integrated in education to instill values in students that would encourage the struggle against the Occupation and as a tool for liberation and emancipation. With the change in the political scene and the emergence of the peace process, HRE became a tool for the PA to impose a vision affiliated to its political agenda, disregarding the rights-based approach and adopting a statist approach that does not echo the needs and demands of the colonised nation. This change in vision is linked to the second theme that shaped HRE in PA schools: donors’ agendas and external politics. They played a significant role in ensuring the introduction of HRE. However, this introduction was conditional. HRE is decontextualised and depoliticised as an attempt by the MOE to maintain its relations with donors and avoid scrutiny from the international community. Thirdly, Palestinian internal politics played a negative role in shaping HRE. The institutionalisation of human rights within the national curriculum stripped human rights of its revolutionary potential, where students are
expected to learn about being obedient citizens, and prioritise values of peace and co-existence before opposing human rights violations. Religion and culture emerged from the data as the fourth theme. Both are connected and overlapping. Islamising Palestinian curricula in general and HRE in particular negatively affected the notions of universality and interdependency of human rights, and disregarded Palestinian culture in favour of mainstreaming a religious approach that is on the rise in the whole region. The Islamisation of HRE might be considered however as a method for resisting perceived western domination and the imposition of values that could be considered foreign. Linking human rights to Islam in a process of vernacularisation might be considered an act of resistance. However, this should be considered with caution as it might hinder critical engagement with both value systems and disregarding the presence of other religions and belief systems within Palestinian society and exacerbating stereotypes, inequality and alienation of certain groups.

In chapter (6) I discuss how these sources of influence affected the understandings, perceptions and actions of my research participants in relation to human rights and HRE, with a particular focus on students and teachers.
6.1. Introduction

The analysis in chapter (5) answered my first research question:

*What are the sources of influence that shape human rights education (HRE) in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the Occupied West Bank?*

To answer this question, I introduced and discussed a number of factors that led to the introduction and integration of HRE in the Palestinian education system over different historical and political periods, as well as factors that have shaped HRE within PA schools in the Occupied West Bank post-Oslo. These factors emerged from a thematic analysis of ethnographic data generated in the field, in addition to various MOE strategies and reviewing the content of civics textbooks. In my analysis I paid particular consideration to the socio-economic and political context in which these main themes were positioned.

The thematic analysis produced four main themes: the Palestinian education vision, donors’ agendas and external politics, internal politics, religion and culture. These themes contribute to the shaping of HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, and impact the way human rights in general and HRE in particular are perceived and understood by the research participants, shaping their practices in relation to HRE. In this chapter I answer the second research question:

*What are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the Occupied West Bank about human rights in general and HRE in particular?*

Throughout my field research, I noticed that practices and perceptions were interlinked and that it was not possible to understand one without the other. Hence, this question demands I not only unpack the perceptions regarding human rights and HRE, but also explain the practices in schools conducted by teachers, head teachers, students and sometimes parents.
I answer my second research question in this chapter through analysis based mainly on individual and group interviews with teachers and students as well as classroom and whole school observations. During group and individual interviews I sought to ascertain my research participants’ perceptions of human rights in general and HRE in particular. Their answers were not mere perceptions or general anecdotes, but a representation of a deep understanding of their everyday context. Context counts particularly when we talk critically about education (Apple 2013). From a critical constructivist perspective, I attempt to reveal the deep structures underlying schooling by analysing how schools are agencies of social and cultural reproduction and sustain dominant social practices (Giroux 1983). This has major implications for HRE in schools as will be argued in this chapter. Additionally, the experiences and stories of the research participants, who are oppressed and marginalised, enabled me to understand more deeply what HRE means and how it is enacted in real life, finding answers in these ‘subjugated epistemologies’ (Kincheloe 2005, p.145).

I verified the interview data with my participants by triangulating it with extensive classroom observations and context observation inside the school, spending full days in my sample schools. Classroom and school context observation demonstrated how perceptions about human rights and HRE impacted upon the attitudes and practices of all school actors.

The data generated in the field was thematically analysed, producing two main themes: the hidden curriculum and teacher values, and contradictions.

6.2. The Hidden Curriculum and Teachers’ Values
In this section I focus on how teachers’ agency is reflected in their practices in the classroom. Teachers transmit their understanding about and perceptions of human rights, negative or positive, through their conduct in school as a whole and during civics classes, particularly where HRE occurs. The agency of students should not be underestimated. Students’ agency is highlighted through examples of their activities and actions within the school, and in chapter (7) where I focus on students’ struggle for change and resistance.
School curriculum is generally accepted as an explicit, conscious, formally planned course with specific objectives. In addition to this didactic curriculum, students experience a less formal or planned *unwritten curriculum*. This *hidden curriculum* includes values, intergroup relations and celebrations that enable students’ socialisation processes (Kentli 2009). The hidden curriculum is what students learn at school through the way that school work is planned and organized, but it is not explicitly included in the planning of school arrangements or in the consciousness of those responsible for them (Kelly 2009). The hidden curriculum can be embedded in the school ethos, wall decorations, posters and photos, mottos painted in the school yard and so on. It can be embodied in teachers’ classroom management approaches (Le Compte 1978). The hidden curriculum contributes to the transmission of norms, values, and beliefs in the school and the social environment (Giroux et al 1983).

The functions of the hidden curriculum include the inculcation of values, political socialisation, training in obedience and docility, the perpetuation of traditional class structure-functions that may be characterised as social control (Vallance 1983). This social control can be best seen in daily school practices such as the morning line-up, or the students having to stand up every time the teacher enters or exits the classroom. In societies that struggle with socio-economic, religious/sectarian and/or political divisions, schools can exacerbate these divisions as well as heal them. In some respects schools are microcosms of society, where the divisive values of society are transmitted through the hidden curriculum. Just as education can be a participating factor in creating or exacerbating conflict, it can also play a crucial role in preventing and resolving conflict (Lundy & McEvoy 2007).

In interviews in the Occupied West Bank, academics, MOE officials and activists mentioned the hidden curriculum mainly as a negative contributing factor that shapes HRE. The practices of teachers within schools including transmitting their own values through the taught curriculum was considered part of the hidden curriculum by my research participants. Teachers were accused of imposing their own political, religious or social agendas that contradict with human rights values and the basics of HRE. In rare cases, teachers were praised for disregarding
politically motivated text or concepts from either the PA or donors, and using their own nationalist ideas to link HRE and to students’ reality. Whether blamed or praised, the majority of teachers had cynical perceptions of human rights and HRE.

As discussed in chapter (5), teachers view HRE as a topic imposed by donors, and that teaching human rights is hypocritical considering the political conditions and the Occupation that dictate theirs and their students’ lives. This cynicism made them use culturally specific and religious, mainly Islamic, references during civics classes in defiance of Western imposition. These references highlighted the idea that Islam is not inferior to international human rights standards, but is superior and more suitable for the Palestinian context. Although some MOE officials and academics accuse teachers of imposing religious values, the textbooks also state the superiority of Islam over any other value system, such as human rights in this case.

Figure 6.1: 12th grade Contemporary Issues textbook. The section is entitled Human Rights in Islam
In the figure above, the section discusses human rights in Islam. It states that human rights in Islam are more suitable than those stated in international conventions or other documents as ‘they are given to humans by the creator [God]’. The section does not provide any space for critical engagement with this idea or enable students to juxtapose it with the universality of human rights and/or those rights that contradict with Islam and its values and/or practices such as the death penalty, sexual orientation and the freedom of belief. This issue was discussed in detail in chapter (5) under section (5.5).

From classroom observations I noticed that teachers rarely explicitly criticised the Occupation and/or the political reality that severely violated teachers’ and students’ rights. This is only done in line with PA policies and political agenda. Criticising or even mentioning PA violations is avoided for fear of persecution.

6.2.1 Values Transmitted and the Hidden Curriculum in Opposition with HRE

Civics teachers receive training on various topics related to human rights as well as interactive, participatory and student-centered teaching and learning approaches. The National Institute for Educational Training and a number of (I)NGOs provide these trainings. An official at the National Institute for Educational Training stated:

‘Teachers receive the required training to be able to effectively engage with the material in the civics textbook, however, the value systems and beliefs of the teachers prevail at the end of the day!’

An MOE official mentioned that the new civics textbooks were finalised at the peak of the second Intifada which started in September 2000, when the Israeli military imposed curfews and movement restrictions. This hindered the MOE’s ability to conduct comprehensive training for teachers and monitor the implementation of the new civics curriculum. The MOE’s priority was distributing the books and teaching them. Following up on this, I asked:

‘Considering the lack of training for teachers and that there are none specialised in HRE and/or civics, how do teachers deal with controversial issues, such as the death penalty, gender issues or LGBTQ rights?’.
He said:

‘We do not have such issues in our textbooks. The death penalty is regulated by the law and can be discussed according to Shari’a law and Islam and/or the Palestinian basic law. LGBTQ is a western notion; we do not expose our students to such topics’

This quote demonstrates that the MOE as well as teachers play a role that could jeopardise HRE via the omission of certain information, sensitive topics and controversial issues, which denies the opportunity for criticality and discussion among students. However, the role of teachers is of particular significance when considering the power of omission as they may skip topics they are not comfortable teaching.

‘In our society we have a list of forbidden issues to be discussed. If teachers consider a certain issue within the book as contradictory to the dominant culture, according to their own understanding and set of values, they will just skip it. Like issues related to sex education. Even when they know that the curriculum aims to protect students from sexual violence, harassment, sexually transmitted diseases, or the simple fact of knowing your own body!’ (Female researcher at Birzeit University).

In addition to omission, teachers may ridicule the human rights topics that expose them. In the 8th grade civics textbook, a chapter entitled: Towards a safe life focuses on domestic violence and encourages students to defy violence at home and at school by knowing their rights and reporting instances of violence. In theory this chapter comprehensively covers learning about human rights and for human rights. However, I witnessed high levels of physical and verbal violence and abuse every day I visited the boys’ and mixed schools. When I asked a number of students in a focus group at the South of Nablus boys’ school about this chapter, one student said:

‘The civics teacher is the only one who does not beat us. So he can talk about this topic. However, other teachers beat us really hard. We tell them that they cannot do that! They laugh, hit us more and say: mush a’jibkom batlou [if you don’t like it leave school]’.

These students told me that many classmates had left school because of this violence. When I asked the headteacher about this, he laughed and said:
There is no violence in the school! This is part of bringing up a generation that obeys the rules. You have seen the kids; they are violent, uncontrollable and useless. Those who leave, they do so because they are not interested in education.

Such acts by teachers violate children’s right to education by forcing them to drop out of school, and constrain students’ agency. Students become skeptical about using human rights discourse to protect their rights, or even see the relevance of the notion of child rights at all. This violence creates a negative perception towards human rights for students, affecting their conduct both at school and in wider society. By suffering spanking, paddling or slapping by teachers, students reach the conclusion that violence is an acceptable way of expressing anger, and that if you are powerful enough you can get away with hurting someone (Kohn 1999). Here, physical/direct violence is legitimised and accepted. I discuss violence in more detail in section (6.3.3) below.

The civics classes I observed were all teacher-centered. Students could participate by raising their hands to answer questions, but teachers gave final answers to conclude discussions. Teachers I interviewed considered these classes interactive and student-centered, as they allowed for discussion and for students to express their opinion. In one of the girls’ schools, students were asked to collect stories and prepare presentations about women’s rights. The teacher used the material the students prepared to present her lesson, rather than students presenting their own material. This behaviour by teachers and the viewpoint that this tokenistic participation of students is student-centered and participatory reflects the education system’s hierarchy. This hierarchy reproduces societal values that consider older people and those in power as the source of truth and knowledge. In this sense, schools reinforce society’s existing authoritarian relationships rather than encouraging democratic relationships.

In the classroom, teachers used stereotypes which contradicted human rights values. One of the most striking examples was during a civics class in a mixed school in West Ramallah during a class was about media, and social media in particular. The teacher intended to make a joke and said:
‘So girls might be chatting to a guy, thinking that they are falling in love with this tall, handsome, blond guy… while in reality he is black and ugly. So you need to be careful’.

This racist language passed from teachers to students cements the discrimination against people considered different in Palestinian society. This type of discriminatory language contradicts values highlighted in chapter 3 of the 8th grade civics textbook, entitled: Palestine – the country of diversity and pluralism! This particularly disturbing example of racist and discriminatory language intensifies stereotypes and prejudices, and exacerbates notions of injustice and inequality.

The curriculum cannot be detached from its context. Curriculum work has regular characteristics which are discussed in detail under section (6.3.): students, teachers, and subjects all interacting in local, on the ground situations (Schwab 1973; Parker 2004). In this section I focus on the role of teachers. The director of the education programme in a Palestinian NGO told me:

‘What is in the textbook does not matter. You can have the best textbooks in the world but the interpretation by the teacher can destroy the best intentions by those who authored the books. You can have a picture of two women, one covered and one not covered to show diversity within society, but the teacher will tell the students how inappropriate the inclusion of uncovered women is and how that contradicts with the values of Islam’.

The MOE strategies do not stress the role of teachers in social change unlike the pre-MOE documents, but teachers’ roles cannot be mechanical. As the quote above indicates, the curriculum cannot be teacher-proof. Attempts to produce teacher-proof packages and supporting material have failed, as teachers will enact their agency to adapt and use what they are offered in their own ways (Kelly 2009). These purposes are not necessarily negative. On the contrary, teachers have a role in making just as much as breaking when we consider HRE.

6.2.2. Values Transmitted and the Hidden Curriculum in Harmony with HRE
When considering the positives of the hidden curriculum there is a strong gender aspect. From my observations and the comments made by academics, MOE officials and NGO representatives, female teachers tend to be more positive about HRE and their conduct within the school and classrooms is more in line
with HRE principles compared to male teachers. These attitudes encourage students to be more engaged and empowered to make change, even if just on the scale of their school. This was most visible in the three girls’ schools that I visited. In these schools there was noticeable engagement between the school and the community. Students were active, well-spoken, aware of human rights, played a role in school decisions through committees and had positive relations with the majority of their female teachers. On the contrary, mixed and boys’ schools had no committees or any form of engagement with the community. Every time I visited boys’ and mixed schools there was an argument or a problem between students and teachers, or between teachers and parents, physical and verbal violence were visible. When I mentioned this to an MOE official he mentioned a number of boys’ schools that were considered models of engagement, activism and academic achievement by the MOE, but I did not visit these schools. Girls’ schools with these characteristics were not mentioned by name by the MOE. When I asked why, the MOE official said:

‘The vast majority of girls’ schools are good. Teachers are dedicated and the girls are excellent. They want to score high in their exams, they want to help their community, in general girls want to excel and they do’.

In a girls’ school close to Qalqilia in the North of the Occupied West Bank, the headteacher was proud of the trainings in HRE she attended in the UK and USA at her own expense. She showed me HRE-related material produced by the students based on human rights projects they were involved in. In the same school, two civics teachers insisted that the girls thoroughly read the consent forms that I provided, encouraging them to ask me any questions and be critical. They explained to the girls their right to understand and acquire all the information needed before signing. These two civics teachers told me about a human rights project students were involved in where students were actively documenting Occupation violations in their village and the surrounding villages. With a human rights NGO they prepared reports for a presentation at an annual human rights competition organised by the MOE and a Palestinian NGO every year. When they discovered my background was in human rights the girls did not miss the opportunity to ask me to help by reading their work and providing them with comments.
At the girls’ school in Hebron, the headteacher was protective of her students, asking me to arrange a clear and strict visits schedule between 7:30 AM and 1:00 PM. She demanded I did not take more than 30 minutes a day of the students’ time, saying:

‘We are happy to help you but my students’ time is precious. They have their classes and their projects. I am sure you understand.’

This is in contrast to the boys’ school in the South of Nablus, where the headteacher and civics teacher did not ask me about the consent forms. When I insisted that students had to read and understand and sign them, the headteacher said he could sign them for all the students. I refused. The civics teacher in the South of Nablus boys’ school told me to take as many students as I wanted for my focus group sessions and said:

‘Keep them for as long as you need, they will run away from school anyway! It’s not like they will attend any classes. Even when they do they do not learn and they make trouble’.

The difference between the attitude and the commitment of male and female teachers, based on my observations in the sample schools, can be attributed to a number of socio-economic and political factors which will be discussed in section (6.3.2.).

The positive atmosphere in the girls’ schools reflected the students’ understanding and acceptance of human rights and HRE. In a focus group near Qalqilia, the girls expressed enthusiasm about their HRE projects. They were articulate and brave; discussing women’s rights, domestic violence, sexual violence, violations of women’s inheritance rights, gender inequality and the oppression of women in their community. They discussed these issues openly in front of their teacher who was supportive.

In Hebron, also in the presence of one of the civics teachers, the girls were able to critically discuss the death penalty in Islam. This was a pleasant surprise for me considering the conservative nature of the city. The teacher did not try to stop the discussion when it became intense, but asked the girls to be respectful and take turns raising their hands before expressing their opinions.
In these two schools, teachers passed on a culture of mutual respect and empowerment to their students through the hidden curriculum. There was no obvious physical or verbal violence in the school environment, and the girls were more positive about their education than those in the boys’ schools and the mixed school. This does not rule out the existence of bullying and physical and verbal violence in these schools. In a focus groups in Hebron, a girl told me that a teacher slapped a girl when she raised her voice during an argument. The incident was not taken lightly and a committee of students, teachers and parents was formed to discuss it. Female students also mentioned bullying by (mainly new and young) teachers.

This analysis shows how teachers’ perceptions of human rights and HRE affected their conduct within the school in general and in HRE in particular. Teachers transmitted certain values to students through their conduct, attitudes and behaviour, either in line with human rights or contradictory to them. Discussing the hidden curriculum assists us in critically considering aspects of school life that link schools to wider society (Giroux 2001). This idea takes me onto the second theme in this chapter, contradictions.

In the next section I discuss the impact of the political, social or school level on the perceptions of students and teachers regarding human rights and HRE, and how these perceptions make the implementation of HRE precarious in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank.

6.3. Contradictions and Paradoxical Effects

‘Palestinian students live in an environment that does not make sense. They are expected to go to school, study, play, sit for exams, pass exams, learn about human rights and respect human rights in a place where violence and human rights violations surround them and dictate every aspect of their short lived lives. They are trapped between the Occupation, domestic violence, violence in school, poverty and much more… How is that possible!’ (Youth activist from Hebron).

As mentioned in the previous section, four characteristics dictate the work of the curriculum: context, students, teachers and subjects (Schwab 1973; Parker 2004). The interconnected nature of these means efforts to introduce HRE without simultaneous changes to other aspects of school life are likely to be
counter-productive and promote cynicism and skepticism among learners (Osler & Starkey 2010). Palestinian students face and experience human rights violations within schools and in every aspect of their lives. The political, economic and social conditions they experience are not conducive to human rights or HRE. While Palestinian students acquire the skill to use language through which they can name the violations and discriminations they experience and observe (ibid), their experience leads them to perceive this language as foreign. They develop a level of criticality and cynicism which enables them to ridicule those who work in human rights or even ask about human rights. When I asked an eleven-year-old male student in a youth centre West of Ramallah about human rights and HRE, he said with a smile:

‘Do you want me to tell you what you want to hear or do you want the truth? If the truth will give you trouble writing your research I can make life easier for you and give you the right answer’.

Cynicism and skepticism towards human rights and HRE prevailed among both teachers and students, even students and teachers who tried hard to make changes, as in the case of the female teachers and students mentioned previously. Below I elaborate on the sources and the impact of the contradictions that create such cynicism and skepticism towards human rights.

6.3.1. Contradictions on the Political Level
Palestinian children are often stuck between the arbitrary and excessive use of violence against them by Israeli soldiers and violent treatment at the hands of PA security forces (Strickland 2015). The Israeli army killed more Palestinian civilians in 2014 than in any other year since the Occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip began in 1967. Israel’s military attacks on the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem resulted in 17,125 injuries, and the deaths of 2,314 Palestinians, compared with 3,964 injuries and 39 deaths in 2013 (OCHA 2015). In 2014, Israeli occupation forces killed ten children with live ammunition in the Occupied West Bank (Abunimah 2014) and more than 521 in the Occupied Gaza Strip (Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights 2014). More than 1,200 Palestinian children were arrested or detained by the Israeli army in 2014 (Strickland 2015). Between 500 and 700 Palestinian children are prosecuted in Israeli military courts
each year (DCI-Palestine 2015). While in Israeli lockup, children are often interrogated, threatened, sexually assaulted, beaten and forced to sign confessions in Hebrew, a language that most of them do not know. In some cases, they are held in solitary confinement (Strickland 2015). Some Palestinian children are expelled from their cities and/or villages or sentenced to house arrest for extended periods, jeopardising their right to education among other rights.

I discussed the abuse of Palestinian child rights by Israel with a lawyer in one of the Palestinian human rights organizations. He told me:

‘Sadly Palestinian children have to face similar brutality by PA officers as well, those who they learn in school that they have the obligation to respect as they keep our society safe! With this, for children the Israelisation of the PA security is complete, they don’t see them any differently’.

The PA arrested 2,455 Palestinian children in 2013. Palestinian security officers interrogated, threatened and beat them. In some cases Palestinian children were forced to sign a confession that they were not allowed to read (Purkiss 2014). These tactics echo Israeli soldiers’ harsh treatment of Palestinian children in the Occupied West Bank, including Occupied East Jerusalem (Strickland 2015).

Teachers are in a similar position. They are arrested, beaten and killed by Israeli soldiers. They also face the wrath of PA security measures. Teachers who fail a background security check according to the PA, meaning that they are found to be supporters of Hamas, are dismissed from their jobs. Suspended teachers in 2007 organized a sit-in by the PM office to protest the illegal measures taken against them. The sit-in was violently obstructed by the Palestinian police who gathered demonstrators into groups of three, and dropped them off in remote areas (Alsaafin 2013).

These violations reflects on the school environment, where violence practiced by teachers against students is not surprising. Often teachers who complained about the oppression and injustice they face, from the Occupation or the PA, practiced oppression and violence against their own students. This included civics teachers. bell hooks’ generalised ideology of domination is pertinent here - groups that complain about and challenge oppression often exercise domination
over other groups (hooks 1994b). This also applies to social and economic oppression as discussed in the next section. Another concept relevant to school conduct is Freire’s concept of the duality of the oppressed (Freire [1970] 1993), where the oppressed, individually and/or collectively, internalise the oppressors’ values and beliefs. I would add here conduct and language. This can be exemplified by an incident I witnessed in the boys’ school in the South of Nablus. One student was whistling in the 9th grade maths class and the teacher was annoyed. The whistling did not stop and the students refused to tell the teacher or the headteacher who was making the noise. I asked the counsellor about measures that would be taken by the headteacher, as he seemed furious and frustrated that students were defiantly standing in solidarity with their colleague. I was told that the headteacher would impose a collective punishment. The term collective punishment was striking, as it is used by the Occupation against Palestinians. During my next visit, a week later, I asked six 9th grade students about the incident. They told me the headteacher made them write confessions individually, hoping that one of the students would say who committed the crime of whistling. Again, this is another term and tactic used by the Occupation. The students’ reaction to measures taken by the headteacher reflected a lack of trust in the whole system. Any human rights values that could be passed on by teachers in this school would not be taken seriously by the students. Students experience collective punishment as opposed to fair treatment and due processes in school, making them cynical and rejected. I discuss violence in schools in section (6.3.3).

Students and teachers also face a contradictory political discourse from PA officials. There is no popular abandonment of the position that the whole of Jerusalem, is the capital of Palestine and that refugees’ right of return based on UN resolution 194 is sacred. This is stated in civics textbooks. However, during students’ visit to Al Muqata’a in April 2014 for President Mahmoud Abbas’s speech (mentioned in chapter (5)), he stated that Palestinians have the right to a state with East Jerusalem only as the capital and have a just solution to the refugee issue rather than the implementation of UN resolution 194. This contradicts with the foundation of the Palestinian struggle. After this trip, I asked
students during a group interview in a youth club in West Ramallah about the president’s statement. One of them said:

‘The PA is a proxy for the Occupation, we all know that. They use our rights to haggle with over their need to stay in power’.

He continued with a sarcastic smile:

‘Not sure what kind of power that is, they are as occupied as we are!’.

In spite of the common skepticism about the PA, the PA’s discourse does matter. Unfortunately, in most cases it has a negative impact. During a meeting with Israeli students in February 2014, Mahmoud Abbas commented without reservation or explanation that Palestinian media and schoolbooks include incitement to violence (Kuttab 2014). A women’s rights activist and academic I discussed this with said:

‘I cannot believe we have reached this low! Whatever the MOE, which is one of PA’s institutions, his institutions, will do now to prove that Palestinian education does not incite violence is delegitimised, no one will believe them! I really feel for them!’.

One of the students at the youth club in West Ramallah said:

‘If the “president” [the student gestured the scare quotes with his fingers] does not believe that schoolbooks teach us human rights, why should anyone! Why should we care!’.

The contradictory discourse and conduct by the PA and the violations committed by the Occupation leave Palestinian students and teachers puzzled about human rights, and the legitimacy and applicability of HRE in such a multilayered confusion.

6.3.2 Contradictions on the Socio-economic Level

Teachers are central to an analysis of HRE for two reasons: the role of teachers in propagating and sometimes addressing human rights violations in their immediate sphere of influence, mainly schools; and the ripple effect of teachers’ practices in the larger community around them (Bajaj 2012). Human rights educators must be committed to human rights and believe in their necessity for building a just and democratic society (Flowers 2000). To better understand the perceptions and conduct of Palestinian teachers towards human rights, it is imperative to consider their role as teachers under continuously deteriorating
economic conditions. The deteriorating economic situation impacts the social context which directly affects teachers’ conduct in schools. It affects the status of teachers in school and society, and the relations between teachers and students. In a context where teachers are overburdened, underpaid, and work in overcrowded and under-resourced classes and schools, and in an environment where the security situation is highly volatile, we cannot assume they can take the additional responsibility of teaching in line with human rights principles. The school counsellor in the South of Nablus explained this, stating:

‘The majority of male teachers work two extra jobs in addition to their teaching jobs to provide for their families. In a small community, particularly Palestinian villages, people know each other, sometimes all the village residents come from two or three families, so it is difficult for teachers who work more than one job to maintain their teacher-student relation in the classroom’.

The counsellor said this when I asked him about the excessive violence I witnessed at his school. He saw I was puzzled and did not really understand what he meant. So he added:

‘Some teachers in this school are the village plumbers, builders or taxi drivers. These jobs are considered menial in our society. This means that some of their students pay them their wage, for example if a teacher goes to one of the kids’ homes to fix a leaking tap or a broken window! This puts the teacher in a weak position and makes him feel humiliated. To gain their dignity and respect in the classroom, they use violence’.

The director of the education department in a Palestinian NGO said that this shift in teachers’ roles causes a difference in performance between female and male teachers. Female teachers, in the vast majority of cases, are not the primary breadwinners in the family and have less financial responsibilities. They may have more time in the evenings to prepare lessons and engage with their students. Like the majority of women in Palestine, they have fewer chances to participate in public life and influence social change. HRE and civics education provides the opportunity to make the social impact they cannot make outside of the classroom.
In a context of high unemployment, teacher jobs with the government are considered a good stable option, particularly for new graduates. Hence, teachers do not see themselves as catalysts for change, but as government employees who need to spend a certain number of hours at school and get paid at the end of the month. Additionally, the current education system structure is disempowering for teachers who do not have a say in how schools are run. They must do what they are told and read pre-designed scripts to their students (Kincheloe 2005). Teachers’ lack of influence and ownership detaches them from the material they are expected to teach. This exacerbates feelings of alienation from human rights and concepts stated in civics textbooks, which are perceived as Western and/or imposed.

The disempowerment of teachers is linked to major political and socio-economic changes. Since the signing of the Oslo agreement and the establishment of the PA in 1993 and 1994 respectively, the PA has maintained the myth of statehood under colonial occupation, abandoning efforts for self-determination and liberation. With the endorsement and support of the EU, IMF and World Bank, the PA has adopted neo-liberal policies (Hilal 2015), which were exacerbated during the internal strife between Fatah and Hamas in June 2007. The PA prides itself on its ability to form successive technocratic governments that can allegedly, enable Palestinians to overcome their political differences, end corruption, and achieve peace and statehood. The technocratisation of Palestinian politics, economy and society, is a myth forged by the EU, World Bank and IMF, who require Palestinians to prove that they are capable of managing a state. Apart from the ‘orientalist’ and racist implications of this myth, it leads to the individualisation of Palestinian communities, where the social processes that legitimise and prioritise individual interests are seen as paramount. The impact of values of self-interested individualism and capitalism is visible in the undermining of solidarity among individuals and communities. This prevents collective resistance to settler-colonialism, apartheid and outright racist discrimination (ibid 2015). Hence, the alleged creation of a technocratic society and government in the Occupied West Bank could be seen as counterproductive, including its impact on education.
In [this] era of globalisation and the attempts of the Palestinian ruling party to be, or appear to be part of it, ‘education serves as a mechanism for social, political and economic control, which is exercised in the consensual mutuality between political elites and corporate interests. In this context, societies struggle to cultivate humanity against the dominance of neoliberalism as well as to make schooling relevant to disenfranchised populations while recognising social and cultural situationality of education’ (Pherali 2015, p. 193). This project to create a technocratic society has ignored the importance of educational aims that support the rights of Palestinians and the role of teachers as agents of emancipation. There is a clear shift in the MOE’s vision stated in the Palestinian education strategies of 2008-2012 and 2014–2019 and the curriculum vision of 1998. The 1998 MOE curriculum plan focuses on human rights, equality and social justice (MOE Curriculum Plan 1998), whereas the MOE strategic Plan 2014-2019 focuses on the employability of students after graduation, and their ability to compete in the market and to engage with the latest technological developments (MOE Strategic Plan 2014-2019).

I noticed from my observations and interviews that teachers perceive their job as just a job rather than it carrying other aspects and responsibilities. One of the civics teachers said:

‘Life is difficult, we have children at home and it’s our responsibility to raise them and feed them. Kids here in school are here to learn. Their parents can teach them values and check their behaviour. In school, we teach them what we have to. It’s in the book’.

The perception and understanding of teachers in relation to their role in school and with their students, has shifted in comparison to the role they claimed prior to the creation of the PA and MOE. During the first Intifada, as mentioned in chapters (1) and (5), teachers led various aspects of community-based struggle against the Occupation and held what the Israeli occupation considered illegal classes in makeshift facilities and their homes to ensure that students could continue their education. Aside from a few teachers who still claim this role, the majority have adopted the just a job concept, leaving behind the emancipatory, supportive and empowering role they were previously expected to have.
6.3.3. Contradictions on the School Level

“We do recognise the gaps between what we offer in the textbooks, what teachers believe in and present to students, what students experience and hence what they take out of the classroom’. (MOE Official).

What happens inside schools is connected to the wider political, security, socio-economic context. In this section, I focus on practices in schools contradictory to human rights. I also present the arguments which my research participants used to justify these practices.

6.3.3.1. Various Types of Violence

‘States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child’ (UNCRC 1989, Article 19).

In Palestine, there are legislations, protocols and codes of conduct that, in theory, uphold the rights of children and protect them from physical, psychological and sexual harm. However, these measures are not without caveats and their implementation is weak at best. The weakness of implementation stems from two factors: firstly, the absence of enforcement and monitoring mechanisms. Secondly, the violence experienced by students is on various layers; it is direct, structural and cultural. Students are exposed to violence at home, in school and in public. By their parents, teachers, PA security forces and the Israeli occupation army and illegal colonial settlers. This second factor is discussed in detail in this sub-section.

Upon the transfer of authority from Israel to the PA following the signing of the Oslo Accords, two days before the commencement of the school year 1994/1995, the MOE did not radically change the education system that year, from reverting to the uncensored textbooks and outlawing corporal punishment (Barakat 2007). The banning of corporal punishment proved to be more rhetorical than enforced in schools. The PLO and subsequently the PA expressed commitment to international conventions related to the protection of child rights. In 1991,
although not a state body, but symbolically, the PLO ratified the UNCRC. In 1995, on Palestinian Children’s Day, the PLO further endorsed the Convention as a binding and applicable legal document that guides practices within the OPT for all children, which was reaffirmed by late President Arafat in 2002 (PA 2010). After the PLO was granted non-member observer State status at UN in 2012, the PA/PLO ratified the UNCRC in April 2014. In terms of local legislation, Palestinian Child Law (PCL) 2004 (article 42) dictates that all forms of violence and abuse against children are prohibited and that the State should take action to prevent and address it. Under the PCL, the child has the right to protection from all forms of violence: physical, psychological, or sexual harm or injury, and any other form of ill-treatment or exploitation. The State should take all necessary legislative, administrative, social, educational, and protective actions and measures to secure this right (PA 2004).

In addition to the legislation mentioned above, the MOE works with various UN agencies, Palestinian NGOs and INGOs on initiatives to end violence in schools, particularly corporal punishment. Protocols have been prepared that focus on educating teachers and children on the importance of ending violence and bullying in the classroom. Student participation in decision-making processes like educating teachers, advocacy at the community level, and having all partners agree to end all forms of violence are currently underway. The MOE also coordinates efforts on child protection with the Ministry of Social Affairs (MOSA). The MOE has extensive school counselling programs. School counsellors work with children who have experienced abuse, violence, and neglect. Cases that cannot be handled through the counselling program are referred to the national child protection and referral network (PA 2010). With the support of UNESCO and the EU, in 2012 the MOE issued a booklet entitled: Code of ethics for the teaching profession and rules of conduct (Teachers’ code of conduct hereafter). The teachers’ code of conduct states that teachers should respect their students and make all efforts needed to gain knowledge about students’ rights and all education laws and procedures, including those related to banning violence in schools. During my field research, none of the teachers I interviewed had heard of this document.
In spite of these legal and procedural measures, children experience structural violence, where ‘violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances’ (Galtung 1969). In the OPT, children cannot submit files and charges against anyone directly - only their legal guardian/custodian is allowed to do so (PA 2010). This exemplifies how children are unable to expose violence against them, hindering their agency to improve their lives and uphold their rights. Direct/personal violence prevails in PA schools. ‘Corporal punishment is widely used, often accompanied by verbal violence – scornful expressions, humiliating words and pejorative judgments’ (Mansour 1996, p 306). Teachers who are violent with students are not charged, reinforcing the condoning of violence against children. The MOE does not report on cases of violence, another manifestation of structural violence. Only if the parent opts to file charges against the teacher will any form of legal action be undertaken (PA 2010). School counsellors are required by law to report instances of violence directly to the MOSA child protection officer. However, from my field visits counsellors told me that this procedure was not implemented.

The use of corporal punishment is still viewed as an acceptable and appropriate means of discipline within society (PA 2010). When asked, teachers, head teachers and sometimes parents say that corporal punishment is used for children’s own good. This cultural violence means that direct and structural violence are legitimised and justified through framing it within religion, ideology or language (Galtung 1990), thus rendering it acceptable in society (Demmers 2012). In the South of Nablus boy’s school I witnessed a student being beaten by his teacher at the headteacher’s office. The student’s father walked in as the student was being punished. The father took his son by the hand and asked the teacher about his son’s wrongdoing. The teacher explained that the boy was misbehaving in class and that his grades were very low. The father held the boy by the ear and directed his sentence to the teacher:

‘If he misbehaves and does not do well in his next test, don’t only beat him with the cane, I give you my permission to ida’as a’ra’abito [step on his neck]’.
I talked to the father after he left the headteachers’ office. After questioning my position as a researcher, he said:

‘Human rights do not make successful people, child rearing and corporal punishment go hand in hand. These kids need to learn’.

During my interview with students at the same school, the students told me that their parents, particularly their fathers, support and encourage corporal punishment in school.

Verbal violence in the boys’ and mixed schools I visited was constant. It included the use of degrading and humiliating language against the students, and was used by all teachers and headteachers with no exceptions. Physical violence was severe in the boys’ school. I saw students being hit with canes on their legs, backs and hands. Students were slapped on the face and back of the neck. In one of the 9th grade focus groups, boys told me about one particular teacher who they called the criminal. He had a special way to punish them which included pulling their ears hard until he hears a clicking noise.

In addition to the physical and psychological harm to the students, the use of corporal punishment exemplifies the authoritarian relationship between teachers and students. This contradicts with the values of mutual respect, active participation and the right to freedom of expression that students are supposed to be learning in school, at least as part of HRE. Psychological and sexual abuse are present in PA school in the Occupied West Bank but are rarely tackled, discussed or even mentioned.

In the mixed school, female students talked about bullying and gossiping by their teachers, who used intimate family stories to humiliate the girls in front of their classmates. Two girls in the 9th grade were sitting next to each other. One of them said:

‘We have the same father. Our father is married to both of our moms. The [female] teachers sometimes come to class and the first thing they say in front of everyone is: did your father spend the night last night at your place or hers?’
She continued:

'We feel very humiliated and the other students at the beginning started making fun of us, but now they know the teachers are just being mean! It's not a funny joke for our classmates anymore'.

In the boys' school, during one of the focus groups, students talked about their relations with girls in the village and how they meet them outside the village or chat to them on facebook. While we were discussing relationships, one of the students mentioned sexual relations and how they are not allowed to talk about such issues at home or in school. At that point other students started laughing. Some of them were clearly embarrassed. When I asked why they were laughing, one of the students said:

'We are not allowed to talk about these things in class but we exchange videos with one of our teachers'.

They all laughed again and their faces turned red. When I asked what kind of videos. The same student replied:

'You know ya miss! Videos that we are not allowed to watch. People having sex!'

The students did not realise that this teacher's behaviour amounts to sexual violence and abuse. Students refused to elaborate on the story. I asked the counsellor about this particular incident. He said:

'These things happen but there is no way to control them. The students will not complain as they don't consider it harmful or abusive behaviour, and they are too shy to talk about it'.

On more than one occasion, both male and female students expressed their feelings of hatred towards school, and their fear, humiliation, embarrassment and exclusion. I talk about exclusion in section (6.3.3.2). All forms of violence at school have a negative impact on children’s right to education and their perception of their abilities and self-worth.
In the boys’ school in the South of Nablus, a 9th grade student told me during a focus group session:

‘We were 25 students in class last year, but this year we are only 18. Many students leave because they cannot take the violence we experience here. There is something wrong in this school ya miss! I am telling you it’s wrong’.

In such cases, school can be more damaging for children than being out of it. In a workshop organised by a Palestine NGO specialised in citizenship education, a senior officer at UNRWA said:

‘If I had the choice, I would never send my children to school’.

Such widespread violence in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank leaves physical and psychological scars on students, depriving them of their right to education and dignity. It also exacerbates the cycle of violence that encircles Palestinian children. Violent teachers are influential role models. Children use violence in their daily practices and grow up to be violent adults. Some of the students I interviewed, particularly boys, bragged about being beaten by their teachers, as if it was a badge of bravery and success (Harber 2004). In such an environment, hypocrisy was the word mentioned when students compared the values presented in the textbooks to the practices of their teachers. This affected their ability to believe in human rights.

‘Ya miss... nothing that happens in our school is related to our rights. We don’t even know why we have to study about rights! Its a joke. Teachers use bad language, beat us ... they don’t care if we come to class or not. We just have to obey or we suffer violent consequences. How should we believe in what they [the teachers] tell us about child’s rights!! We don’t’ (male student from West Ramallah youth centre).

6.3.3.2. Segregation

Segregation exists in PA schools in practice but there are no written rules that imply segregation. Segregation happens based on gender and students’ grades and behaviour.

The majority of PA schools in the Occupied West Bank are single gender. However, in small towns and villages, due to the small number of students, schools can be mixed gender. I thought this was a positive achievement
considering the conservative nature of small villages in the Occupied West Bank. However, visiting a mixed gender school proved that even such school is segregated. In classrooms, girls and boys sit on different sides of the room, and are not allowed by the teacher to sit next to each other. In the schoolyard, girls and boys do not mix, play together or ever talk to each other. When a girl goes to the toilet, the headteacher or teacher watches in case she is tempted to have any kind of contact with a male colleague! I asked the MOE about this but officials assured me there were no rules that require such segregation. It was left to the teachers and headteachers in that particular school to decide how to deal with mixing students. Such segregation creates a sense of anxiety and discomfort among students who feared being accused of wrongdoing if they spoke to a friend of the wrong gender. This contradicts what is presented in civics textbooks, where boys and girls are shown working together at school and in the community.

Figure 6.2: Illustration taken from the 9th grade civics textbook - lesson on voluntary work
The contradictions between textbooks and reality creates confusion in relation to gender roles and relations. The banning of any form of contact between girls and boys is not conducive to building a constructive relationships between students and contributes to strict gender roles within society.

Segregation also happens based on students’ behaviour and grades. Good students, who do not cause trouble, listen to their teachers, obey the rules and obtain high grades sit at the front of the class and are treated nicely by teachers. Other students labelled troublemakers, who may not have high grades, are forced to sit at the back of the class, and are never asked to participate. In one focus group at the mixed school in West Ramallah I asked students sitting at the back to participate. They refused. I asked them why. They said:

‘No one cares what we think. Can we just leave?’
Fasheh (2000) stated that labelling a child a ‘failure’ is a criminal act against that child. Students who are segregated and marginalised because of an assumed category by their teachers, internalise these negative perceptions about them and feel marginalised and alienated, losing belief in their abilities and self-worth. Marginalisation and alienation also estrange students from the learning process, as shown by behaviors like passive resistance, withdrawal of labor, truancy, disruptive activities, violence, self-harm and dropping out of school (Johnson 2005).

6.3.3.3. Lack of Participation

The majority of the students I talked to said their opinions were not considered, and their participation in decision-making is tokenistic when it happens. The clear and visible hierarchy within schools mirrors the hierarchy of Palestinian society. It hinders students’ ability to participate in decision-making, participating or creating change.

When I visited the South of Nablus school for the first time, 9th grade boys told me they were organising a school trip as the weather was improving and spring has begun. One of my visits was cancelled when the boys were taken on that trip. During my visit afterwards I asked the students if they had fun as they were all very excited about it. One of the students told me:

‘It was really bad! They took us to Jericho, it was really hot and we were hoping to be taken to a swimming pool. But the headteacher decided that we should go sight-seeing. They took us to the mount of temptation, the church was closed! We wasted so much time climbing the mountain, we were tired and bored’.

I asked them what happened. Another student said:

‘We got really angry, we all sat on the ground and refused to move until we were taken to the swimming pool. They again refused so we demanded we go back home. It was really bad’.

Restricting the students to exercise their freedom of choice and participate in making a decision about an issue as simple as deciding where to go on a school trip was attributed by the headteacher to: the students’ inability to make a good judgment and the students’ safety. This informs claims that children and young people are deficient adults, that they lack the experience and requisite cognitive
abilities to know what is in their best interest. Such claims justify paternalist responses that adults ought to exercise a duty of care, something which constrains the capacity of young people to make choices until they are cognitively able to do so. This requires adults to restrict and deny freedom ‘for the student’s own good’ (Bessant 2014).

While the right to freedom of expression and participation are stated clearly in civics textbooks, students do not experience these rights in school and/or in society. The boys’ decision to make a point by having a mini sit-in and refusing to move during the school trip unless their ideas and needs were taken into account was based on their sense of frustration and was not an enactment of their right to express their opinion on the school decision. These acts of resistance are momentary and do not lead to a longer-term change or even change at that particular moment. The students were disappointed and preferred to go back home. I will be talking about the students’ acts of resistance in chapter (7).

Children and young people enter school with life experience from the social contexts in which they have lived (Kincheloe 2005). Palestinian students carry extraordinary and rich life experiences at a young age considering the responsibilities they are forced to have, such as providing for their families and resisting against a brutal occupation. However, they are not able to contribute experiences which would add value the education process as a whole. Palestinian teachers I observed were not interested in students’ own stories that linked directly to human rights issues discussed in class. This created a sense of detachment between the students and knowledge from the textbooks provided. The knowledge of the classroom, the intersection between students' personal experience and academic knowledge (Kincheloe 2005) is missing in Palestinian classrooms.
A project manager of an education project told me about his experience organising a fundraising event with students. He said:

‘The school selected the students with the highest grades! I refused. So we selected 10 students randomly, the headteacher said some of the students I selected will give me a hard time as they are troublemakers. The so-called troublemakers were the most engaged and efficient. Some of them were brilliant at collecting money, organising the event and doing the finances at the end of the day. These kids who performed brilliantly, I found out later, work after school. One of them worked in a bakery and the other sold paper tissues at traffic lights in the city’.

6.4. Do they Dare to Resist?

‘When individuals and groups are so oppressed by dehumanizing social structures and conditions that they succumb to a sense of fatalism. Enveloped in a culture of silence, they come to accept that this is the way things are meant to be and they lose their transformative capacities’ (McInerney 2009, p.26).

Certain aspects of culture normalise repression and exploitation (Galtung 1990). For example, in a South of Nablus group interview, one student said:

‘Sometimes I do not blame the teachers when they beat us, we actually drive them crazy’.

However, there is resistance to the oppressive and dehumanising conditions students face, particularly inside schools in the Occupied West Bank, examples of which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Hence, I do not believe that students have succumbed to a sense of fatalism. However, these sporadic acts of resistance fall under what Giroux (1983) calls oppositional behaviour rather than resistance. According to Giroux, not every act of oppositional behaviour constitutes an act of resistance. Resistance requires radical consciousness, collective action and intentionality. Students’ response to the school trip and whistling incident were reactions to behaviour they perceived as unjust at that moment without linking it to the mainstream structure of violence and hegemony throughout their schooling experience.
In some cases, students refused to take action against violence or injustice. For example, students told me that when MOE officials visit the school, teachers’ behaviour changes. They become nicer to the students, corporal punishment stops during the visit and classes become more interactive. I asked whether they would take advantage of these visits to complain to the MOE officials about the violence they experience in school. One student said:

‘Haram ya miss! We feel bad for our teachers. We know they have a tough life’.

Students realise their schools are microcosms of the wider societal context. School reproduce on a smaller scale the dynamics which move their society. Students realise that they and their teachers suffer from the adverse effects of the Occupation and the intense institutional violence. Hence, students still have a sense of compassion towards their teachers and do not increase their oppositional behaviour to a full-scale resistance. Most probably they are unable to do so.

6.5. Conclusion
In this chapter I examined HRE through the critical lens of my research participants. Their approaches to HRE explained practices in school that were either conducive to HRE or contradicted HRE in particular and human rights values in general. This chapter focused on two main themes from the data generated in the field: the hidden curriculum and teachers’ values and the contradictions.

While there are certain practices in schools that support the values of human rights, particularly in girls’ schools and by female teachers, the majority of teachers’ practices, school regulations and school environments contradict what students learn about human rights in civics classes. This causes frustration and cynicism about human rights and the reasons for learning about them at school. Conduct by teachers and headteachers, like excessive corporal punishment, verbal violence, psychological and sexual abuse, render HRE senseless, useless and counterproductive. However, the picture is not all dire. Students had high levels of knowledge about human rights, raising voices of dissent and criticality among the research participants, although these voices were not currently
listened to. These voices form a basis for hope that a more critical model of HRE might arise. Schools, even in their current status, form sites of contestation, opposition and resistance; in the future they might also be sites for change. The issue of resistance and struggle and their relation to HRE in PA schools will be discussed in chapter (7) which tackles my third research question.
Chapter (7)
Human Rights Education and Struggle in the Occupied West Bank

7.1. Introduction
The Oslo process, and the negotiations between the PLO/ PA and the successive Israeli governments that followed until the date of writing this thesis, have damaging effects on all aspects of life for Palestinians living in historic Palestine and diaspora. The so-called peace process did not bring an end to the Occupation but ensured its continuation, reinforcing asymmetries of power and structures of oppression of the occupier over the occupied (Roy 2002). The years following the signing of the Oslo Accords are shaped by policy imperatives imposed and practiced by successive Israeli governments and reflected in the policies and practices of the PA. The Israeli government has solidified its control over the Palestinian population and resources and impeded Palestinian geographic, social and cultural continuity. The PA’s imperatives are manifested in the systematic demobilisation and repression of the Palestinian people and the disempowerment of their institutions, as discussed in chapter (2) where the PA obstructed the work of grassroots organisations and demonised human rights institutions. It attempts to eliminate all forms of dissent and opposition, particularly to the Oslo Accords; and continues to uphold security cooperation with the Occupation (ibid). In spite of these damaging effects, some prominent Palestinian academics and education practitioners saw positive results from the signing of the Oslo Accords and the creation of the PA and its institutions, particularly in relation to education:

‘If any good came out of the Oslo agreement of 1993, it is the fact that the Palestinians took charge of the education portfolio and that, for the first time ever, they had the chance to prepare their own school curricula and to run their education system (Baramki 2010a, p.16)’.

This view is criticised by other academics and activists who question the ability of the PA’s education system that emerged in 1994 with the creation of the MOE to remedy the destruction caused by historical legacies that have emptied the educational process of any social, cultural, political and economic relevance.
(Mazawi 2011). They question the ability of Palestinian policy makers to devise, not only a meaningful educational policy, but also a humanist and empowering one that would be responsive to all Palestinians including marginalised social groups (Hilal 1996). Additionally, considering the PA’s imperatives mentioned earlier, it is not clear how a repressive authority whose main aims are to maintain its limited political gains, protect the interests of its elites, and perpetuate an existence that depends on the continuation of the Occupation and an internalisation of the colonial narrative (Wadi 2016), can devise an education that feeds into a liberation agenda based on human rights.

Human rights are embedded in the current PA education system, particularly in the civics education curricula and the HRE projects implemented in schools by Palestinian NGOs and INGOs in cooperation with the MOE. The above-mentioned concerns apply to HRE, particularly when examining its purpose and ability to: 1. Provide knowledge and tools that enable students to identify and struggle against the root causes of human rights violations rather than symptoms (prevention); 2. Enable students to build a human rights culture where violations are not normalised, accepted or tolerated and where there is space for critical engagement with various socio-political conditions without marginalisation and/or alienation (protection); and finally, 3. Enabling students to struggle against violations and those who commit them, through re-appropriating the human rights discourse and rooting it in experiences of just struggles that take place and are taking place around the world (Taking action).

Thus far in this thesis, particularly in the analysis chapters (5) and (6), I focused on factors that led to the introduction of HRE within the Palestinian education system and the perceptions of those directly dealing with it such as MOE officials teachers, head teachers and students. Throughout my analysis for the first two research questions, I highlighted the importance of considering the social, cultural and political contexts as determining factors that influence both the introduction and perceptions of HRE. In this chapter, I examine the influence of HRE introduced in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, if any, on the social and political context by tackling the political and social engagement of students. I also examine factors that enhance and/or hinder the influence(s) of HRE in relation to
social and political engagement and activism. In doing so, I respond to the third and final research question:

*To what extent does HRE inform students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the Occupied West Bank?*

This chapter draws primarily on data generated in the field through classroom and whole school observations and semi-structured interviews. I include examples from civics textbooks and documentary data. Additionally, due to the continuous and rapid changes in the political conditions in Palestine and the impact of this on the involvement of students in political and social activism, I include data and information from media coverage for certain students’ initiatives in particular and the changes in the political context and the responses of Palestinian youth in general which I observed and collected after my field research.

Aiming to answer the third research question, the data were thematically analysed, the main theme that emerged was *struggle*, which was sometimes also referred to as acts of *resistance* particularly when used in the context of the struggle against the Israeli Occupation. Under this main theme, research participants highlighted two types of struggle: *struggle for social change* and *struggle against the Occupation*. This theme is discussed within the definition and conceptualisation of HRE based on the Palestinian context which I devised in chapter (2), where HRE is

‘An ongoing process built on universal human rights standards and rooted in the praxis of people struggling for their rights, aiming to raise consciousness, dismantle structures of domination and oppression and build a space where subalterns have the opportunity and ability to make meaningful change to their lives’.

I also explore the disjuncture between the existing HRE in the selected PA schools where I conducted my field research and the aims of HRE based on the definition above. This is done with a particular focus on framing HRE within three main elements: prevention, protection and taking action. These were also devised based on the contextual analysis and literature review in chapter (2).
This chapter is divided into three main sections; I start with linking the notion of struggle with education in general and HRE in particular and contextualising it within the Palestinian setting. Then I move to the two sub-themes identified by my research participants, namely: struggle for social change and struggle against the Occupation.

7.2. Education and Struggle

Education in general and schools in particular are sites of struggle for and by oppressed people (Apple 2013). The space of schooling is a site of contestation, resistance, and possibility (Giroux 2003, p.6). Struggle within the school space manifests in different forms. For example, there is the struggle between the rote way of teaching, or the ‘banking concept of education’ (Freire [1970] 1993, p.53) and radical pedagogy based on the assumption that ‘learning is not about processing received knowledge but about actually transforming it as part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice’ (Giroux 2003, p.11). Struggle can also be exemplified in the contradiction between the rigid information imposed through prescribed curricula and the experiences that students bring to the classroom. One of the female students who attends the youth club in West Ramallah told me:

‘Here in the club we do workshops, we talk about our lives, our real lives! In school it’s like we live in a bubble. What’s written in the books or what we are taught by teachers is either old information or so far from reality!’

I asked her what she meant by far from reality, she answered:

‘Ya miss… they talk about the rule of law! Have you been to the villages? Big families make the laws, they rule with guns and power. Plus, the Israeli Army can do whatever they want! What law says that they can take my little brother from his bed in the middle of the night!’

What the student described above is a phenomenon that Freire ([1970] 1993, p.52) calls the narration sickness. Where ‘Teachers talk about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalised and predictable… A topic completely alien to the existential experience of the student’. Freire (ibid) describes the words of the teachers in this case as emptied, hollow, alien and alienating.
Education becomes a site for struggle when it is employed as a tool to resist dominant structures of power, either social or political such as patriarchal hegemony or the hegemony of the coloniser. In the case of colonisation, the coloniser employs education during the colonial project to frame policy, create elites and allies, divide society and serve the foreign power’s interests. Here, education is used to establish a disciplined colonial subject (Youngman 1986). The colonised in these cases use education as a counter strategy to struggle against the colonial project, for liberation. This is the case in Palestine when education was utilised during different periods as a tool to struggle against multiple colonial projects, Ottoman, British and Israeli, as explained in chapters (1) and (5) and discussed in section 7.2.1 below. However, this is not the case under the rule of the PA and its confused vision.

In the two sub-sections below I discuss first the multi-layered struggle for and over education in Palestine particularly on the political level, in relation to the Occupation and the PA’s political agenda. Within this political context, I then move to discuss how HRE is linked to, or detached from, students’ struggle/resistance against the Occupation and for social change.

7.2.1. Multi-layered Struggle For and Over Education
As affirmed in chapters (1) and (5), throughout their modern history, under the Ottoman, British, Jordanian, and Israeli control Palestinians’ ability to devise their own education system was not possible or limited in the best cases. Their access to education was curtailed and sometimes prohibited in the case of the first Intifada for example when the Israeli occupation shut down Palestinian schools and universities and criminalised education for Palestinians. Currently under the Occupation’s measures that severely restrict the freedom of movement of Palestinians, the ability of Palestinian students to access school is hindered. Palestinians have used education as a tool to form and maintain their national identity, an aspect that is at the core of their struggle for liberation. During the first Intifada, the Israeli occupying authorities tried to wipe out any possibility of the rise of national concessions among Palestinians through education, however Palestinians managed to develop a national consciousness despite the Occupier’s attempts. For example, teachers developed their own material that
focused on building the national spirit and enhancing an understanding of the importance of the struggle for liberation. Students participated in demonstrations and in acts of sabotage against the Occupation (Moughrabi 2004). The struggle over education continued after the creation of the MOE in 1994. As discussed in chapter (5), since its inception, the Palestinian MOE and the Palestinian national curriculum have been major issues in international political debates and under scrutiny particularly from the Israeli authorities and their allies. Any attempt to highlight Palestinian national identity or mention the struggle against the Occupation is considered incitement. One of the university student political activists said:

‘Incitement is the term the Israelis use to label our political consciousness… even if it was framed within our awareness of our rights, as Palestinians, as humans’.

After the creation of the MOE, a new type of struggle emerged within the Palestinian education system among activists and academics. The struggle was focused on content and pedagogy. The struggle was between the reformist view of secular academics led by Abu-Lughod and traditional educationalists. Abu-Lughod and his team advocated for a Palestinian education that focused on critical thinking, with pedagogy rather than content that moved away from the traditionally used banking approach. This moved away from Arab-Islamic identity and attempted to open education to form a more diverse universal humanist identity, reducing the teaching of religion and including the teaching of ethics and comparative religion. While in their vision, reformists decontextualised education to a large extent from the colonial reality and presumed that Palestine was moving towards a post-colonial phase; they emphasised the importance of democratic education, and the promotion of human rights values in a statist approach rather than as a tool to struggle against the Occupation as I discussed in chapter (5). In spite of its caveats, the process adopted a bottom-up approach, and was to a large extent inclusive and included meetings across the OPT.

Reformists did tackle the political aspect of education in Palestine and raised the question ‘what Palestine do we teach’? (Al-Jarbawi 1996) However this question was left unanswered through the use of a safe shelter of harmless generalisations (Moughrabi 2004). According to Al-Jarbawi (1996), the
Palestinian curriculum must acknowledge the realities of the situation without falsifying historical truth and its repercussions on various dimensions of social science instruction, including civics education and HRE. The reformists’ struggle was with educationalists within the MOE who aimed to maintain an educational vision that set the philosophical foundation of the new curriculum on the basis of reaffirming belief in God and strengthening Islamic discourse, with an emphasis on duty to God, parents, homeland, school and family, with values and moral education, including HRE, based on Qur’anic verses (Moughrabi 2004).

As discussed in chapter (5), there was, and still is, an internal Palestinian struggle over the ideology, vision and purpose of education. Magendzo (1997, p472) claims that ‘educators must be sensitive to the fact that ideological struggles within education have occasionally led to intense social explosions, especially when such struggle is politically divisive’. The ideological struggle within the Palestinian education system has not yet shown an extreme manifestation as such. However, while the MOE believes that the goal of HRE is to teach students about obeying rules and upholding values of peaceful coexistence when they experience the exact opposite of this in their daily lives, this has the potential to lead to tangible confrontation as will be exemplified in the following sections.

7.2.2. Human Rights Education and Struggle

In this section I focus on the disjuncture between HRE in PA schools in terms of political and religious ideology and my conceptualisation of HRE and how this disjuncture leads to political and ideological struggles within the Palestinian education system. The link between HRE and the struggle against the Occupation will be discussed in section (7.4). First I will start with an example related to the political struggle within the Palestinian system.

The majority of human rights as they are presented in the school curricula are linked to a statist vision, as discussed above and in detail in chapter (5). For example, in civics textbooks there are references to elections, which have not taken place since 2006, a constitution (which does not yet exist), the state (which does not yet exist), the Authority, sovereignty, the supremacy of law, courts,
health insurance, and the notion of the separation of power, all of which are currently nonexistent (Moughrabi 2004).

The Central Elections Commission (CEC) in coordination with the MOE runs a large Elections Awareness Project where mock elections take place in schools. In the girls’ school I visited in Hebron, the girls were actively participating, creating their own campaigns, making signs, and mobilising votes. This activity is linked to a chapter in the 9th grade civics textbook entitled: Participating in Civil Society, under which is a lesson called Participating in Elections. While the girls were excited about the practical experience, their disappointment was visible when their head teacher told them that this was only a mock election. Those who won had no role in the decision making of the school and student councils were banned. When I inquired about this particular point, I was informed by the MOE that school councils are banned because they encourage students to get involved in acts against the Occupation and cause them to get into trouble.
I asked the girls who were running for the mock elections about their disappointment and their motivation to still run in the elections, in spite of the fact that they would not gain any real role or ability to participate in decision making within the school. One of the girls said:

‘It’s OK miss, now we are young, we learn. But this is good for the future when we are adults, we will have the experience and knowledge and be able to participate in the real democracy’

In her sentence, this student raised a number of issues. First, that students, as children, are not considered citizens who are able to positively participate in their societies. This in effect disregards their experience outside of the school as active participants in their society and as people with experiences that can enrich the school environment and the teaching and learning processes. This negates the idea that learning is a social activity (Osler & Starkey 2010) and cements the banking concept of education that sees ‘learning as a one-way transmission where the scope of action allowed to students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits’ (Freire [1970] 1993, p.53).

The daily lives of people; students in this case, remain unrelated to human rights texts, and the formulation of human rights norms only serves to widen the gap between rhetoric and experience (Baxi 2008). In effect, echoing Friere and Baxi, Moughrabi (2004) reaffirms that disregarding the experience of students denies the relationship between knowing and action as well as the collaborative nature of these processes. Second, the student does not perceive the school as a real democratic environment or as part of the society where democratic mechanisms are implemented. She links democracy, as a political process, to the outside real world, as she called it, where her real struggle for democracy will take place at some point in the future.
In other cases, hope for taking part in the political struggle in the future was not enough to create engagement and participation, or even to realise self worth. In an interview with a group of students in an all boys school in the South of Nablus, when I asked them about their role in society, one student answered:

‘We are here for people to use us as a stress release mechanism, whoever passes by gives us a kicking just to release their frustration with life... this is our role’.

Enveloped in a culture of silence, individuals and groups come to accept that this is the way things are meant to be and they lose their transformative capacities (McInerney 2009). In other words, within the PA schooling system, students, particularly boys, become oppressed individuals dominated by dehumanising structures rendering their ability to effectively participate limited or tokenistic at best. The PA education system as it stands does not create or allow for that space where students can engage in human rights praxis, limiting their ability to dismantle structures of domination and oppression. The negative experience in school is what raises the consciousness of students about violations rather than the knowledge and skills provided in school where violations become normalised.

The second type of struggle within the Palestinian education system is the ideological struggle, mainly that related to the domination of Islamic discourse. While the rhetoric of the PA, and consequently the MOE, rejects publicly the vision of Islamist parties and groups, they have in reality made concessions to these political and social groups particularly in the education sector (Moughrabi 2004) which is used as a bargaining chip and a means to strike political deals to
avoid confrontations.

‘Education is considered a service, the Ministry of education is not seen as an institution of power and sovereignty like the Ministry of Interior for example! So they give it to the Islamists to shut them up! The Islamists are smart! They know they are shaping generations through their control over education’ (Director of an education NGO in Ramallah).

Islam is dominant as an ideological basis for human rights in the civics textbooks as discussed in chapter (5). For example, the first sentence in the contemporary issues textbook for grade 12, in the lesson entitled ‘Human Rights’, a lesson within the Intellectual Issues Chapter that talks about the origins of human rights as an idea uses a verse from the Qura’an:

‘We have conferred dignity on the children of Adam, and borne them over land and sea, and provided for them sustenance out of the good things of life, and favoured them far above most of Our creation’ (Qura’an 17:70).

The verse is used to prove that the idea of human rights is directly linked to the existence of humans who, according to the textbook referring to the above-mentioned verse, are created by God, ignoring the multiplicity of people, [people’s convictions], texts, institutions, and the variety of practices, struggles and events covered by the term human rights (Douzinas 2007). Imposing a unified philosophical and ethical origins of human rights and referring them to one source to such an extent makes it difficult to see beyond it, hinders the possibility of looking for other sources, forms of knowledge and experiences and leaves no possibility for criticality as the knowledge is based on a sacred text which is not to be criticised or questioned. All of these other possibilities are dismissed and constituted as meaningless or unworthy.

Depriving students of the ability to think critically leads to the reproduction of an oppressive social and political order. However, the imposition of a particular ideology does not mean that we can ignore the importance of human agency. While resisting this imposition has failed within the political system, and given way to political concessions and a pseudo sense of stability to the political elite, observing resistance within schools by students and teachers against such
imposition gives the opportunity to capture various structural and ideological modes of domination and their actual unfolding and effects (Giroux 1983). Some of these effects will be exemplified in sections (7.3) and (7.4).

‘Resorting to Islam and Islamic texts as the basis for issues that might be controversial in such a volatile political context we live in is safe. No need to start a confrontation with the society or Islamic leaning politicians. People like me will not dare complain as we try to find other ways to work with the students… such as the community theater… students do not do what they are taught in schools’ (Director of a Palestinian Cultural Centre in Ramallah).

As I discussed in chapter (5), Islamising human rights in the textbooks might be a tool to vernacularise the human rights discourse and bringing it closer to the dominant culture. However, even the use of international human rights language, norms and conventions without any criticality or space for students and teachers to reflect and act is also problematic as discussed in chapter (2).

HRE is a site of permanent struggle; for it to be connected to meaningful human rights praxis it needs to be connected to its long-term historical trajectory that is linked to peoples’ struggles against power and privilege (Stammers 2009). To maintain its legitimacy and effectiveness HRE needs to be subversive rather than molded into a repressive political or ideological agenda. A critical orientation in HRE would be driven by the idea of praxis, linking critique to social action to create the ideological and material conditions in which equitable and just relationships are imagined and implemented. HRE requires individuals to question the root of knowledge and what they know, to deconstruct the ways in which knowledge has been shaped by external forces. Understanding human rights in terms of the broader social struggle highlights the relationship between human rights, knowledge and power (Giroux 2001). Efforts to control the production, implementation and purpose of HRE as exemplified above are ultimately about the imposition and exercise of power. The exercise of power is a question of regulating and controlling society through particular forms of governance. Here, the idea of government is broader than the traditional understanding about ‘political structures or management of states; rather it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be
directed… To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others’ (Foucault 1982, p.790).

In the two sections below, I discuss how actors in the school, particularly students, struggle against (or sometimes the students used the term resist against) the limitations of this government and exercise their agency, reflecting human rights praxis.

7.3. HRE and the Struggle for Social Change

To understand the role of students, if any, in social change or processes of social transformation, it is important to recognise that schools as educational and cultural institutions are central elements of society (Apple 2013). They are not separate bodies that function in parallel to reality or factories that produce human resources or a workforce for future use. Schools are educational institutions ‘connected to processes of social transformation along multiple dynamics of power … [they are] work places, sites of identity formation, places that make particular knowledge and culture legitimate, and arenas of mobilisation and learning of tactics’ (ibid, pp.151 & 158). In this section, through the lens of the students I interviewed and school observations, I identify the sources and dynamics of power, how students are placed within these sources and dynamics of power, and finally how students’ ability or inability to be agents of change in their own society is shaped by them.

The students I interviewed expressed their inability to make change in their surroundings, whether in school, at home or within their communities. Their perception of their inability to make or influence change, as they mentioned, is due to the hierarchies and structures of power that hinder their capabilities, such as political conditions, patriarchal social structures, structures within the school or home where teachers or parents dominate and control decision-making and in public spaces where those who are older tend to dismiss the opinions of the younger generation. This is contradictory to what is presented in the civics textbooks. For example, in the 9th grade civics textbook there is a lesson entitled: Children’s rights are human rights. One of the rights highlighted is the right of children to fully participate in the family, and in the cultural and social life. To
stress this right, there is an illustration of a boy holding a placard that reads: I too have an opinion.

Figure 7.3: ‘I too have an opinion’ – illustration from 9th grade civics textbook

The expression of inability is gendered and conditioned by location and timing. In terms of location, girls have more space to express their opinions and act on their ideas within the school context, while boys are considered troublemakers if they refuse to obey the rules or make suggestions for change. However, outside of the walls of school, particularly in villages or cities that are perceived as religiously and culturally strict, girls are confined to the private space (home) and are unable to engage with decision-making in the wider community while boys can engage or at least be exposed to public debates and decisions that are linked to the local community in their villages.
During my observation of a classroom in a girls’ school in Hebron, the teacher during a 9th grade civics class on women’s rights said:

‘In this school, our girls are free to come up with ideas for projects to enhance their learning experience and school environment. They come up with the ideas and implement them with no restrictions and with the support of their teachers. We want our girls to become leaders in their community, within what is culturally acceptable and within the guidance of our religion. Women in Islam are the queens of their homes… right girls?’.

In the boys’ school in South of Nablus, during one of the focus groups with 9th grade students the boys expressed their dissatisfaction with the state of the school, they said that the school is newly built but it feels so cold, distant and unwelcoming. They said that they suggested changes to make it more friendly and colourful by changing the colours of the walls, the head teacher refused and told them to mind their own business.

The volatile political context in the Occupied West Bank has a particular impact on the ability of female students to participate. During a focus group in a girls’ school in a village in the North of the West Bank near the city of Qalqilia, the girls expressed their interest in women’s rights, in particular the issue of inheritance and how in villages women are deprived of their inheritance in contradiction to Islam. One girl said:

‘We started to think about a campaign to raise women’s awareness that they have a right to inheritance, we planned the campaign and got in contact with the village council but the Israeli army invaded the villages and we were told our campaign in particular and women’s rights in general are not a priority now’.

She continued:

‘When it comes to women’s rights, they are never a priority. We are always told that resisting against the Occupation is the priority and women’s rights come after. How long do we have to wait ya miss! This is just an excuse’.
Teachers and head teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with change, particularly change initiated by students, girls and boys. The head teacher in the South of Nablus boys’ school told me:

‘Students are too opinionated, if we want to listen to each one of them and implement their irrational ideas mnikhlasish! [we will never see the end of it]. In school there is a system, uniformity. If we take someone’s opinion and not the other we will be discriminating… isn’t this against human rights!’.

This logic of suppressing students’ opinions and assimilating them into one homogeneous group to ensure equality is in fact exclusionary and limits students’ criticality and capabilities. This logic is in line with the MOE strategy that affirms that the Palestinian education vision aims to:

‘Prepare the Palestinian who is proud of his (sic) religion, nation, homeland, and Arab and Islamic culture’ (Summary of MOE Third Strategic Plan for the Development of Education 2014).

The strategy assumes the uniformity of religion and religious beliefs for all Palestinians, and that Palestinian culture is always linked and intertwined with the Arab and Islamic culture which is static according to the vision of the MOE. It also assumes that students are only recipients of knowledge that equips them to uphold and conform with this vision and its underpinning ideologies. Based on Giroux’s (2003) theory and resistance in education, the Palestinian vision for education, particularly within the premise of the PA, whether perceived as progressive or conservative, consider schools as being locked into a future that could only repeat the present. For conservatives, in the case of the PA, those following the statist neo-liberal approach, ‘the present is the dream of creating capitalist subjects, pliant workers, and conforming intellectuals. Schools in this perspective were about educating for accommodation’ (Giroux 2003, p.6). For progressives, in the case of Palestine educational reformists, activists and critical academics, schools are ‘Ideological State Apparatuses,’ powerful social structures actively involved in the process of moral and political reproduction (Althusser 1977 cited in Giroux 2003, p.6). These two views have in common the assumption that schools are institutions that have no potential to link learning to social change. Within these perspectives, teachers and students lost their ability
to become critical agents, serving either as ideological gatekeepers or as obeying agents for the state (ibid).

While the opinions and ideas of students are dismissed in favour of maintaining the status quo, the MOE and schools do not have the same reservations when projects and ideas are proposed and implemented by donor agencies or donor countries or by an NGO or institution funded by an external donor. Going back to the elections example discussed above, during my interview with a university student activist from Hebron, he said:

‘In schools they do mock elections; they focus on the technicalities of the process rather than the context, as if elections are the only manifestation of democracy! They completely disregard Palestinian democratic experiences during the different historical phases... trade unions, women’s movement and so on. Why don’t they teach that in school, isn’t that more relevant? Our indigenous knowledge and experience is being glazed over with an imposed agenda and a pseudo statist vision’.

What this activist told me echoes the importance of the argument that HRE will only have meaning, relevance and impact when it is linked to the daily realities of people and their struggles for freedom, liberation, justice and against all forms of oppression, rather than solely linking it to institutionalised frameworks and international regimes and processes. In the girls’ school I visited in the village near the city of Qalqilia, the head teacher was proud of her students’ human rights work which was displayed on the walls of the school in the form of posters and certificates. She told me that she goes to HRE-related trainings in the USA to make sure she is up to date with the most recent and advanced HRE work and developments in the field. She told me that she covers the expenses of these trainings from her own pocket. She said:

‘We are building a new state, we need a generation aware of their rights, able to claim them and at par with people their own age in developed countries in terms of knowledge and skills especially in human rights. My students are not less important than those I meet in the US or the UK. We need to be able to compete.’
The term *compete* struck me! While the enthusiasm and dedication of this head teacher was admirable, she dismissed the indigenous knowledge and experience and saw HRE as a service or commodity that needs to be produced so that we Palestinians can have it, and use it to compete in a global market. This perception defies an aim of HRE where students acquire the knowledge and skills not to compete but to change their oppressive realities, but is harmonious with the PA’s institutionalised, neo-liberal, statist vision and the NGOisation of human rights in Palestine. This is exemplified in chapter four of the 9th grade civics textbook entitled: Solidarity between People. While the title implies the role of people as individuals or groups in solidarity, the lessons of the chapter focus solely on the role of institutions, particularly NGOs, in supporting vulnerable and marginalised groups in society. The focus on the role of institutions and organisations in addition to the state without mentioning the role of individuals or the collective responsibility of communities sidelines the role of students. They are considered, and consider themselves outside of the structure, the institution and at the bottom of the hierarchy. Hence, their role in social change and/or transformation is diminished.

7.4. Human Rights Education and the struggle against the Occupation

On 29 August 2013, the footage of Israeli soldiers in their uniforms, flack jackets and carrying guns (The Guardian 2013) being carried on the shoulders of Palestinian youth in a wedding in Hebron, dancing along with the crowd shocked Palestinian society. In an interview with a youth activist from Hebron, she said:

‘This is shocking! Who teaches these young Palestinians, what kind of education system produces this group of Palestinians who are willing to carry their oppressor, their occupier on their shoulders!’.

Her comment’s deep anger and disappointment, in particular towards the PA education system, raises the issue of the role of education in the struggle against the Occupation, mainly highlighting its role in building the awareness and consciousness of Palestinian youth. While education is not the only element that shapes the consciousness, vision, attitudes, and practices of individuals, groups and the society as a whole, it does impact cultural and ideological formation in its
various forms and plays a strong part in the process of moral work that prefigures
the transformation of the state (Mayo 2014), which according to the MOE strategy
(2014-2019), Palestinian students are being prepared to build. The incident in the
wedding in Hebron reflects Freire’s view of the oppressed who:

‘[A]lthough they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are
at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose
consciousness they have internalised. The conflict lies …
between ejecting the oppressor within or not ejecting them;
between human solidarity or alienation… This is the tragic
dilemma of the oppressed which their education must take into
account’ (Freire1993 [1970], p.30).

While HRE is integrated in the PA education system particularly within civics
education, practices within schools and the MOE and the PA negate the
emancipatory aims of HRE as discussed in chapters (5) and (6), rendering HRE
meaningless. A student at a youth center in West Ramallah told me:

‘We do not need HRE in school to realise we are oppressed, we
do not need incitement to know we are occupied and resist’.

Under section (7.1) I mentioned that the data and analysis in this chapter include
information collected and observed after my field research as the situation in
Palestine is ever changing. This is particularly relevant to the unprecedented
events that took place on 23 February 2016. As I was writing this chapter,
Palestinian teachers in the Occupied West Bank announced a general strike and
arranged a demonstration before the Prime Minister’s Office in the city of
Ramallah. Teachers’ striking is not an unusual action in Palestine, what was
unusual this time was the reaction of the PA. The PA, prior to this general strike
and demonstration, detained more than 25 teachers who demonstrated before
the Prime Minister’s office a week earlier.

In light of these events I started monitoring the news coming from the Occupied
West Bank, in particular through social media and following what activist teachers
were posting and sharing. Based on the latest information I collected I made
contact with activists and teachers and conducted a number of follow up
interviews. In a phone interview with a teacher from Bethlehem following the
detention of these teachers, he told me:
‘Those teachers represent all of us. They will be accused of being Hamas supporters! I assure you they are only asking for our rights, fair pay, a humane working environment and a dignified retirement… the PA is detaining us for claiming our rights’

On the day of the mass demonstration, thousands of teachers marched to Ramallah, only to find the PA setting checkpoints around the city, stopping buses, taxis and even private cars carrying teachers from reaching Ramallah. Some teachers told me that PA checkpoints were erected at the entrances of other West Bank cities and villages to stop teachers from leaving. The teacher from Bethlehem I called told me when I asked him how he managed to reach Ramallah:

‘Remember how we used to use bypass and dirt roads when the Israelis closed checkpoints? We took the same route!’.

The calls of the teachers during the demonstration were originally organised to highlight social and economic demands, but after the PA’s oppressive actions, they turned into political demands. Placards carried by the teachers called for the resignation of the government, a restructuring of the teachers’ union and lessening the heavy hand of the PA security apparatus.

Figure 7.4: ‘Thank you State Security for Protecting the Country from Teachers’ – Photo taken by activists on 23 February 2016.
Numerous videos and photos circulated through social media mocking the oppressive, Occupation-like PA tactics against the teachers and praising the teachers for their courageous actions. A video taken by a student from Bethlehem showed a group of male teachers walking from Bethlehem to Ramallah, one of the teachers was screaming:

“We the teachers, will teach you what dignity means, we will teach our students what rights and dignity mean through our actions… the time of empty words has ended”.

A group of female students from a PA school in Ramallah took to the streets and joined their teachers in their demonstration.

The political activism of both teachers and students demonstrates human rights praxis. This is what a director of an education NGO told me when I asked him his opinion regarding the events that were taking place and the confrontation between the teachers and the PA:

“No textbook will ever teach students what rights mean. Only taking matters into their hands and opposing the oppressor. Their teachers today demonstrated that beautifully”.

When I asked him about how the teachers’ actions might link to the struggle against the Occupation, he said:

“The struggle needs to happen against all systems of oppression. The PA is one of them”.

Through demonstrating critical consciousness and human rights praxis, Palestinian teachers in the Occupied West Bank have used a pedagogy that is truly liberating, for them and for their students. By taking to the streets, they broke free from the curricula and rigid pedagogies that over the years have remained distant from them and their students, the oppressed. On 23 February 2016, the oppressed became their own example in the struggle for their redemption (Freire 1993 [1970]).
Similar to the teachers’ struggle example above are students in the Occupied West Bank who are called the ‘Oslo generation’, referring to those who were born around the time of the 1993/1994 Oslo Accords and after. These are the ones who should be living under the control of the PA, learning HRE with the PA statist and taming vision, but are in reality highly politicised, well-informed, detached from traditional Palestinian political structures, disillusioned and angry. With the heightened Israeli attacks on Palestinian communities and the continuation of the failed peace process, this generation chose to perform acts of resistance; either acts of peaceful resistance or physical and armed attacks against the Occupation, which are unprecedented and consequently difficult to control. A youth activist from Jerusalem told me, when I interviewed her in November 2015, following the killing of three Palestinian youth by Israeli soldiers:

‘Everyone says that we, young people, leave school, go out in demonstrations, throw stones and die because we have lost hope, because we have nothing to lose! They are mistaken… we resist because we have so much to lose’.

Even if there is some truth about suicidal tendencies in the actions of desperate youth from a Durkheimian perspective (1952 [1897]) this would not be a monstrous phenomenon unrelated to other forms of behavior; they are related to other acts, both courageous and imprudent, by an unbroken series of intermediate cases. What Palestinian youth do, in terms of direct confrontation with the Occupation, particularly heavily armed soldiers, is not suicide, they do not intend to die, they intend to end their oppression.

In an interview with a student from the school in south of Nablus which I conducted during my field research, he told me:

‘Ya miss…. Human rights are great [Ala Aini o Rassi], but when it comes to Palestine, they mean nothing…. You hear me…. Nothing. It does not matter what methods we use to resist, we will always be dehumanised and called terrorists’

The discussion above illustrates how HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank has failed to link human rights to the struggle of the people and frame human rights within people’s praxis, consequently rendering HRE meaningless and useless in dismantling structures of domination and oppression. HRE in this
case is unable to create alternatives and ways to build a space where subalterns, students and teachers in this case can make meaningful changes to their lives. The subalterns took to the streets and found that the direct confrontation with the oppressor is the only way to weaken the structure of oppression.

7.5. Conclusion
In this chapter I answered the third and last research question that tackles the link between HRE and students’ social and political activism. The analysis of the data, either data generated in the field or that collected and observed over the course of writing this thesis, produced one main theme: struggle. Under this main theme, I discussed the struggle for social change and the struggle against the Occupation. This discussion was contextualised and framed within the multi-layered political milieu, particularly the PA’s and Occupation’s repressive measures against Palestinians.

I started the analysis by highlighting aspects of the struggle for and over education, using examples to highlight the struggle within schools between rote learning and critical pedagogy, and teachers’ imposition of information and students’ experiences. I then moved to discussing education as a tool of struggle against colonial regimes in Palestine and the ideological struggle within the Palestinian education system under the PA. From these general ideas, I moved in the chapter to focus on the disjuncture between HRE in PA schools and my conceptualisation of HRE, looking at social and political activism. In terms of social activism and social change, the analysis shows that the institutionalisation of human rights and the framing of HRE within one rigid statist view without considering the role of individuals or the collective responsibility of the community sidelines the role of students who are considered the bottom of the social hierarchy. Hence, their role in social change and/or transformation is diminished.

Finally, I used the on-going confrontation between the PA and Palestinians in the Occupied West Bank, which was manifested by the teachers’ strikes and demonstration in early 2016, to highlight that the struggle against the Occupation is not detached from the struggle against all systems of oppression including the PA. The analysis illustrates that HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank is
unable to relate human rights to the struggle of the people or frame human rights within people’s praxis. This negatively affects the impact of HRE, rendering it unable to act as a tool that can be used to dismantle the structures of domination and oppression – these same systems, particularly the PA, that devised the integration of HRE in schools in the first place.
8.1. Introduction

As a critical researcher, it is essential that I recognise my positionality not only in relation to the context I am working in/on, as well as the research participants I am working with, but also in relation to the topic I am investigating. My starting position when I first set out to undertake this research was that HRE is an essential tool for people, particularly subalterns, to change their reality, identify and resist against the source(s) of oppression and claim their rights. However, in spite of the fact that I still hold this position, my understanding of HRE, as a concept and in practice, was challenged.

In this thesis, I aimed to examine the reasons behind the introduction of HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank and how the main stakeholders within the education system, mainly students, teachers, school administration and MOE staff perceive and construct HRE, understand it and act on it. Additionally, I aimed to uncover meanings and actions attributed to HRE in the context of the struggle against the Occupation as well as other manifestations of oppression within the Palestinian political system and social and cultural practices. In order to achieve these aims I set out to answer three research questions:

- What are the sources of influence that shape human rights education (HRE) in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the Occupied West Bank?
- Considering the Palestinian context, what are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the Occupied West Bank about human rights in general and HRE in particular?
- To what extent does HRE inform students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the Occupied West Bank?

These research questions were formulated based on a pilot field research phase which I conducted over the Spring of 2013. In addition to the formulation of the three research questions, the pilot phase allowed me to test my research methods, identify my research participants and create contacts on the ground in
preparation for the main field research phase which took place during the Spring of 2014.

During both field visits, my close interaction with my research participants, the data generated in the field, and the data analysis process led me to the conclusion that HRE as it stands now in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank is not fit for purpose, it is in actuality a pseudo-HRE. HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank is flattened, decontextualised and depoliticised to serve the elite ruling party, perpetuate social and cultural oppressive practices and structures and implement the political agenda of donors. The absence of critical thinking and questioning within HRE, the deliberate omissions and manipulation imposed on the Palestinian curriculum, its inability to touch the daily lives of the students, and its rigid institutionalisation have emptied HRE from its main purpose and meaning, rendering it meaningless, irrelevant and in some cases harmful. The three analysis chapters (5),(6), and (7) and the critical engagement with the literature in chapter (2), allow for the testing of this particular notion.

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. I start with an introductory chapter (Chapter 1) that sets the scene by presenting the socio-economic, legal, historical and political conditions that shape and impact the Palestinian education system as a whole and HRE in Particular. In chapter (2) I move from discussing the conditions and factors that shape and affect education in Palestine to reviewing the literature related to the factors and conditions that shape and contribute to the development of HRE globally, regionally and locally with a critical perspective. This critical engagement with the literature resulted in formulating an alternative definition of HRE that was in line with the complexities of the Palestinian context and had a vision to support the struggle for emancipation. Chapters (3) and (4) explain the methodological framework of the research as well as the research methods used to generate the data in the field and the subsequent data analysis. The three data analysis chapters (5),(6), and (7) were devised based on the three research questions which acted as an analytical framework for the data.
In this chapter I start by underlining the importance of this research and its contribution to knowledge from both theoretical and empirical perspectives, then I synthesise the thesis findings under two main concepts: Problematising HRE and Reclaiming HRE. I generated these two concepts based on the overall analysis of the data and the critical engagement within the literature, particularly the literature related to HRE definitions and aims that are framed, conceptualised and implemented on the global level by UN agencies, other regional bodies, such as the EU and global NGOs. This analysis led to the conclusion that HRE as it is currently framed, conceptualised, and implemented does not feed into, enhance or support the struggles of the Palestinian people. The framing, conceptualisation as well as the implementation need to be tackled with a critical perspective and looked at through the lens of subalterns rather than those in power, particularly governments. Once HRE is problematised, I use strategies employed by Palestinian teachers, students as well as the Palestinian MOE to reclaim HRE as defined on the global level to fit into the local context. These strategies of localisation and contextualisation such as vernacularisation and Islamisation of HRE are not without caveats. These concepts and their implications will be discussed in detail in sub-section (8.3.2). Subsequently, I draw initial conclusions based on the theoretical and practical implications of this research which contributes to an emerging body of literature on the relationship between HRE and human rights praxis. Finally, I propose suggestions for further research.

8.2. The Importance of this Research and its Contribution to Knowledge

This research draws its importance from the fact that Palestine is a special case. The complexity of the Palestinian context: the colonial Occupation, the political and geographical fragmentation, the oppressive ruling regime, the politicised donor agenda, the strong religious and political ideologies that dominate the education system, and finally the perseverance of the people in resisting the use of various tools, including human rights and education, make Palestine a case from which lessons can be learnt about HRE in theory and in practice.
8.2.1. Theoretical Contributions to Knowledge

As I showed in chapter (2) there are numerous academic studies that track the trajectory of the development of HRE such as the work of Andreopoulos (1997), Baxi (1996; 1997), Tibbitts (2002), Flowers (2000; 2003; 2004; 2015), Waldron (2010), Osler and Starkey (2010), and Bajaj (2011; 2012). The majority of these studies focus on efforts led by UN agencies post-1995. They also identify the legal and political context(s) within which HRE has developed. The studies also identify a number of gaps and pitfalls in the theoretical basis of HRE as well as its implementation. However, critically reviewing the literature in chapter (2), my research suggested that rarely have these studies proposed an alternative to the mainstream HRE conception and definition set by the UN, even when it is criticised. Additionally, these studies tend to overlook or omit two theoretical and conceptual bases for HRE.

HRE has a long history that recognises the struggle against colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid. For example the UNESCO (1974) Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, under point (III/6) states that ‘education should stress the inadmissibility of recourse to war for purposes of expansion, aggression and domination, or to the use of force and violence for purposes of repression’. It also stresses the idea that ‘education should contribute to the activities in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations, and all forms of racialism, fascism, and apartheid’. This key recommendation is omitted in recent UN documents such as the UNDHRET (2011) which is now a foundational document for HRE work globally. The second omission is of indigenous knowledge (Semali & Kincheloe 1999; Denzin et al 2008) built on peoples’ experiences of resistance against oppression and struggles for freedom and emancipation. These two omissions hinder the ability of knowledge produced about HRE to offer a more critical, contextualised and bottom-up alternative to the mainstream institutionalised knowledge that is prevalent. Hence, this research fills a lacuna in the critical literature on HRE and its relation to struggle for political and social change, particularly in multilayered, complicated and ever changing contexts.
Furthermore, in chapter (2), I deconstruct the definitions of HRE provided by UN agencies and other international and regional bodies. I also critically engage with the academic literature that deals with the conceptualisation of HRE. This deconstruction and critical engagement was carried out with the Palestinian context in mind, and led me to devise an alternative conceptualisation of HRE which recognises the main elements of the mainstream definition of HRE; in particular that it is a life-long process built on universal human rights standards (UNDRET 2011). My findings led me to suggest that HRE should be rooted in the praxis of people struggling for their rights. It should aim to raise consciousness, dismantle structures of domination and oppression, and finally build a space where subalterns have the opportunity and ability to make meaningful change to their lives. This conceptualisation does not only offer an alternative understanding of the theoretical basis of HRE but also provides a vision for an emancipatory HRE.

I based my research on critical constructivism, which allowed me to go beyond giving a descriptive account of society and behaviour. Critical constructivism supported the analysis in a way that enabled me to deconstruct the context and the main concepts discussed in this thesis and ultimately provide different perspectives to taken-for-granted assumptions. For example, the Islamisation of the civics education curricula, particularly when human rights concepts are presented and discussed, could be perceived as negative since that challenges the basic concept of the universality of human rights. However, as discussed in chapters (5) and (6), the Islamisation of human rights concepts in school curricula and through the hidden curriculum in the Occupied West Bank is used as a way to vernacularise human rights and make it accessible and acceptable, considering the scepticism that is tied to human rights and its effectiveness in the context of Palestine. Hence, this research exemplifies that employing a critical constructivist perspective to educational research in Palestine will provide a new way to unearth and reveal details and findings that might not be possible using other epistemological frameworks.
Finally, this research showed the critical importance of research participants’ voices, where their ideas, perspectives and insights need to lead the analysis rather than colonial or even post-colonial theories that force the participants’ insights into theoretical pigeonholes. This research and the way that the data was analysed particularly in chapters (5), (6) and (7) exemplify that participants’ ideas led the findings and theory and not the other way round. By using this method, I affirmed the significance of subaltern knowledge, created space for authentic voices by making the ideas of my research participants central rather than the lens of a particular theory. Therefore I brought local knowledge and experience to the forefront of this research. Additionally, by using this method, I contributed to the production of decolonised and decolonising research on Palestine.

8.2.2. Practical Contributions

HRE is a rapidly evolving field of practice. Researching complex, multi-layered and challenging contexts where HRE is constantly conceptualised and implemented is essential to the development of the field of HRE, in terms of its ability to evolve, be relevant and move from the boundaries of institutionalised, rigid, top-down practice to HRE praxis.

There are two main aspects that this research brings to HRE practice globally and in the case of Palestine. Firstly, the research highlights the interconnectedness between HRE and critical research, where this research cannot be done in an assumed vacuum instigated by the supposition of HRE’s neutrality and resorting to the safety of generalisations. Any meaningful HRE research needs to be rooted in the context, hence tied closely to a deep understanding of the political, social and cultural milieu, this can be done only by linking research on HRE to other considerations and concepts such as curriculum, ideology, gender, power, language and social change. This thesis demonstrated, particularly in the three analysis chapters, how HRE and HRE research can be conducted critically and how it contributes to unearthing the relationship between HRE conceptualisation and implementation on the one hand, and other fields and concepts on the other. By acknowledging the interconnectedness between HRE and other fields and concepts, this research brings to the forefront a number of elements that shape HRE not only in Palestine.
but also in different contexts where elements such as ideological influences, donor agendas, international political change and internal political upheavals, and the appropriation of HRE for ideological indoctrination dominate. This domination needs to be considered when conducting research on HRE.

The second aspect is that this thesis provides a new lens through which HRE can be planned, viewed and assessed in terms of its vision, aims and relation to individual and collective emancipation, liberation and self-determination. In addition to the new conceptualisation that resulted from the contextualisation and analysis that I conducted in chapter (2), I was able to frame HRE in Palestine within three main elements: prevention, protection and taking action. Prevention is when HRE provides knowledge and tools that enable people to identify and struggle against the root causes of violations rather than the symptoms. Protection is when HRE enables people to build a human rights culture where violations are not normalised, accepted or tolerated and where there is space for critical engagement with various socio-political conditions without marginalisation and/or alienation. Taking action is the struggle against violations and those who commit them, through re-appropriating the human rights discourse and rooting it in experiences of just struggles that have taken place and are taking place around the world. By using these three elements as a lens to view, assess and plan HRE work in Palestinian schools, researchers, academics, practitioners and policy makers can identify the disjuncture between theory and praxis, what currently exists and what might be an HRE that acts as a tool for emancipation and social, cultural and political change.

In the following section, linking to the three research questions that are the analytical framework of this thesis, I identify connected themes in chapters (2,5,6 and 7) and discuss the findings holistically.

8.3. Synthesis of Thesis Findings: Problematising and Re-claiming

The time I spent conducting the two phases of my field research in 2013 and 2014, the data generated and the extensive analysis process took me through a journey of insights. I was not only able to answer my three research questions, but I was also able to uncover a number of aspects, concepts and gaps that I was
not expecting. These aspects, concepts and gaps fed directly into the main findings of this thesis. Thus, I chose to synthesise the findings of this thesis not just based on the three research questions, but keeping the questions as a guide and anchor for the main themes, I chose to synthesise the findings under two headings: Problematising HRE and Reclaiming HRE. The three research questions helped me understand and describe the conditions that led to the integration of HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, how my research participants made sense of HRE and how HRE was connected to the struggle(s). By synthesising the main findings under these two headings, I was able to take the analysis a step further and deeper. The synthesis under these two headings allows me to respond to those who shrug dismissively and say ‘so what!’ when I talk about HRE in Palestine.

8.3.1 Problematising HRE: From the Global to the Occupied

‘The battle against colonialism does not run straight away along the lines of nationalism. For a very long time the native devotes [his] energies to ending certain definite abuses...this fight ... against the oppression of mankind will slowly leave the confusion of neo-liberal universalism to emerge, sometimes laboriously, as a claim to nationhood’ (Fanon [1952] 2008, p.148).

I chose the above quote as it mirrors the situation in the OPT. Here the vision and struggle of a nation resisting for decades to gain emancipation, freedom and self-determination is hijacked by a contradictory agenda. This agenda, while framed in a nationalist discourse, is designed by the Occupying power, endorsed by the failure of the international community, and implemented by the co-opted national ruling authority. This political context is tightly linked to HRE in Palestine.

The signing of the Oslo Accords marks a critical juncture in the modern history of the Palestinian national struggle for liberation and self-determination. One of the most significant political consequences of the Oslo process is that it considerably altered the nature and multiple configurations of the Palestinian national liberation movement, including political parties, grass-roots groups and bodies. Those configurations, which for decades led the anti-colonial struggle became, under the so-called Oslo peace process, intermediaries to ensure the implementation of
the colonial agenda and embrace an imposed official strategy of state-building based on the two-state formula (Dana 2015). This substantial alteration allowed for unprecedented external intervention, which effectively influenced internal Palestinian affairs including education in general and HRE in particular.

Prior to the Oslo Accords, while Palestinians in the OPT and the diaspora did not have any institutionalised control over their education system, they had a clear vision that education was a tool for resistance and for the preservation of their threatened national, social and cultural identity. Education was linked to solidarity, liberation, struggle and resistance. Either by creating their own schools such as in the case of Kahlil Al Sakakini under the Ottoman and British eras in Palestine, or by devising a philosophy for education under the PLO, which resulted in a 1972 document entitled: The Philosophy for Educating Young Arab Palestinians \([Falsafat al-Tarbiya lil-Sha\'b al-'Arabi al-Filastini]\), or by ensuring the fulfillment of their right to education against all odds in the first Intifada by initiating mass popular education, which was deemed an illegal and criminal act by the Occupation. Through popular education Palestinians affirmed their right to education and battled discrimination. While highly nationalist, the values infused in the Palestinian education vision prior to the Oslo process echoed the human rights discourse that can be found in any universal human rights document. For example the PLO 1972 document, mentioned above, highlighted gender equality, eliminating discrimination based on ethnicity and/or religion and solidarity among nations struggling for just causes and anti-colonialism. The PLO 1972 document stated that as humans we need to create a human community that rejects exploitation, oppression and poverty. Prior to the Oslo process, the vision of education for Palestinians, which I call the \(\text{Palestinian Education Utopia}\) in chapter (5), reflects the HRE framework of education about, through and for human rights in a way that ensures the contextualisation of the human rights discourse and links it to the daily lives of Palestinians either in relation to the struggle against the Occupation or for social and political change.

The creation of the PA and consequently the MOE in 1994 shifted this vision away from a human rights based approach towards rigidly institutionalised strategies framed within a statist approach, monopolised by the ruling elite,
detached from the collective struggle and led by external political forces. These external political forces were made clear in politicised donors’ agendas which falsely assumed a post-conflict situation in the OPT. The donors’ funding that poured into the OPT was conditional. The money was given to the PA in return for silencing the opposition and maintaining the peace process. This was reflected in education where the majority of the content of textbooks was decontextualised, presenting a statist utopia far from the reality of a colonised nation. From the donors’ perspective, Palestinian education, particularly HRE, must not be linked to politics, nor should academic institutions – schools in this case, be a source of producing anti-colonial ideology and dissent. The donor agenda assumed that Palestinian culture is inherently violent and needs taming, deeming it inferior and in constant need of intervention and adjustment (Hovsepian 2008; Leone 2011). This narrative justified the need for external intervention and led to the disregarding of previous indigenous experiences and knowledge, rendering values education, particularly HRE which is enshrined in civics education, de-politicised, decontextualised and detached from reality. This contributed to the feeling of alienation among Palestinians themselves, between the MOE and its HRE curriculum on one hand and the students and some teachers on the other. Similarly, HRE projects implemented by NGOs in schools and with Palestinian students in the Occupied West Bank, are dependent on donors’ funding, hence also on donors’ agendas and the thematic trends proposed by donors. This leads to a lack of sustainability, a confused vision and a loss of credibility.

External politics and the pressure imposed on the PA to keep resistance against the Occupation and opposition to the PA at bay reflects on the nature of HRE in schools in terms of content and pedagogy. In chapter (5), under sub-section (5.4) I discuss how the PA’s oppressive policies stem from their adherence to an external political agenda that trickles down to daily oppressive measures against students. These oppressive measures contradict with the human rights topics presented in the civics textbooks. For example, while in the civics textbooks the right of children to participate is presented and discussed within the framework of the UNCRC and Palestinian law, students are encouraged to participate actively and positively within their communities to create social and democratic political
change. In practice, students are banned from forming student councils under the pretext that these councils might encourage students to be engaged politically and actually resist against the Occupation, an action that, according to an MOE representative, might harm the students and the school.

As I show in the analysis chapters, particularly in chapters (5) & (7), it can be argued that the PA has appropriated the human rights narrative, turning it into a pretext to commit human rights violations and political indoctrination. Students and teachers are not allowed to criticise the conduct of the PA or its violations as the PA is supposedly providing an environment of democracy and human rights-friendly laws. The pseudo adoption of international human rights law by the PA to obtain independence under a colonial occupation rather than struggling for emancipation, freedom and equality is glorified without leaving any ability or margin for students to comment or question this approach. The PA, for example, uses its accession to international human rights conventions and covenants as a way to gloss over its violations. In chapter (7), I use a striking example of the PA’s violation of teachers’ right to peaceful assembly and association enshrined in articles (21) and (22) of the ICCPR (1996), which the PA joined in April 2014 with no reservations. This violation directly reflects on the conduct of teachers in schools. After the teachers’ strikes that took place in February 2016, also discussed in chapter (7), and while I was writing this chapter, one of the civics teachers I interviewed during my field research contacted me and said:

‘From now on, I will only teach history and geography… let the PA teach civics to the students’

His statement reflects the disjuncture between the narrative of human rights used by the PA and its oppressive conduct against the people. This teacher’s anger translated immediately on to the way he perceived HRE, which falls within the civics curriculum. For him, his rights were violated, he became cynical and detached, and the human rights discourse in the textbooks became empty rhetoric that only belongs to and serves the ruling party. This disjuncture was also apparent in the work of NGOs in schools. NGOs train students to identify and document human rights violations committed by the Occupation, but PA violations are not mentioned or even considered. This is a manifestation of the increasingly
authoritarian nature of the PA. But again, in most cases, even the NGO training does not reflect on the students’ ability to actually use human rights documentation as a tool for resistance as that might contradict with the agenda of the PA.

These conditions, starting with the imposed and depoliticised model of HRE, the daily violations of the Occupation and the increasingly oppressive PA policies and practices, in addition to the challenging socio-economic structures, result in an environment which is not conducive to human rights and HRE. On the macro-level, students and teachers develop serious cynicism and disbelief in the global human rights regime. On the school level, due to this cynicism, HRE that is included in the civics curriculum is made redundant. In chapter (6), I discussed the idea that there are four characteristics that dictate the work of the curriculum: context, students, teachers and subjects (Schwab 1973; Parker 2004). The interconnected nature of these four characteristics means that introducing HRE without simultaneous changes to other aspects of school life are likely to be counter-productive and promote cynicism and skepticism among learners (Osler & Starkey 2010). While Palestinian students have the skill to use language through which they can name the violations and discriminations they experience and observe (ibid), their experience leads them to perceive this universal language as foreign and alienating, unless it is linked to their daily lives and the struggles they face, as discussed in chapters (2) and (7). In my research, cynicism and skepticism towards human rights and HRE prevailed among both teachers and students, even those who tried hard to make changes.

In the long run, the confusion in the education vision, the disjuncture between rhetoric and conduct, and an increasing cynicism can lead to devastating results in relation to national consciousness and the ability to make change within this bleak reality.

‘National consciousness, instead of being the all-embracing crystallization of the innermost hopes of the whole people, instead of being the immediate and most obvious result of the mobilization of the people, will be in any case only an empty shell, a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been’ (Fanon 2008 [1952], p.148).
In chapter (7) the devastating results, or the travesty as Fanon calls it, is demonstrated in the incident that took place on 29 August 2013, the footage of Israeli soldiers in their uniforms, flack jackets and carrying guns (The Guardian 2013) being carried on the shoulders of Palestinian youth and dancing along with a crowd in a wedding in the city of Hebron in the south of the Occupied West Bank. This incident that shocked Palestinian society highlighted the role of education which, prior to the creation of the PA, used to be linked to resistance, but is now contributing to internalising the consciousness of the oppressor. This is instead of building the critical and radical consciousness that is essential for collective action and resistance (Freire [1970] 1993; Giroux 1983), not only against the colonial occupation, but all forms of oppression.

While the overall picture seems bleak in terms of the introduction, perception and impact of HRE based on the above analysis, Palestinians actually devised strategies and tools to deviate from donors’ agendas and PA politics that lead HRE. In some cases, Palestinian teachers and students did struggle and resist against the imposition of an alienating and indoctrinating narrative to make HRE more acceptable and suitable to their context. In the sub-section below, I will discuss these strategies reflecting on how individual and collective struggle against dominant and hegemonic discourse can lead to reclaiming this discourse, making it more contextualised and relevant. Alas, not without pitfalls.

8.3.2 Reclaiming HRE: From the Occupied to the Global
The majority of Palestinians express deep skepticism towards the global human rights regime due to numerous reasons. This includes the inability of the international community to end the Israeli colonial occupation and grant Palestinians their right to return, in spite of countless UN resolutions enshrining Palestinians’ rights. The inability and failure of the international community creates a reality that represents a challenge to the application of international law in the case of Palestine and turns human rights into a punctured narrative, with questionable legitimacy and limited applicability. Palestinians, as stateless people, had no chance to participate or have a say in the formulation of the state-centered international human rights regime, hence they feel detached and
alienated from this regime, its norm setting and enforcement (Hajjar 2001). The appropriation of a human rights regime led to Palestinian dispossession, when this regime, led by states, ensured reparations for Jews, victims of the Holocaust, by instating a colonial settler entity in Palestine. The colonial practices of the new entity generated new human rights violations against Palestinians (Perugini & Gordon 2015). Consequently, the year that marks the birth of the human rights regime, 1948, with the creation of the UDHR also marks the start of Israel’s state-building process that was only possible by the destruction of Palestinian villages, the systematic expulsion of the indigenous population, and the settlement of hundreds of thousands of [immigrant] Jews in their stead (Pappe 2006; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007). Finally, the contradictory position and actions of the PA towards human rights and its appropriation of human rights discourse to serve its narrow elitist interests, contributes to the further delegitimisation of human rights amongst Palestinians.

In spite of their cynicism, Palestinians have employed human rights within their struggle. In the 1970s, Palestinian lawyers across historic Palestine based their activism on human rights discourse. They focused their work on the right to self-determination, which is enshrined in numerous international laws and conventions (Hajjar 2001). During the same period, ‘Palestinians adopted the language of human rights and used it both to justify their resistance and as a critique of Israel’s military rule’ (Perugini & Gordon 2015, p.38). During the first Intifada in the late 1980s, resistance was informed by peaceful anti-colonial actions (ibid). Palestinians used human rights not only to criticise and expose the violations of the Occupation, but also to formulate a vision for liberation. The popularisation of ‘human rights consciousness’ was evident in the Palestinians’ expression of their political demands and aspirations (Hajjar 2001, p.27). Human rights language was used in PLO documents and declarations, most prominently the Palestinian National Council Declaration of Independence of 1988. In 2005, Palestinian civil society issued a call for a campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights. The BDS describes itself as a global movement shaped by a rights-based approach. The demands of the BDS are grounded in international law and are sought through non-violent means. The BDS campaign has clear
parallels with the struggle against apartheid South Africa where international sanctions played a key role in bringing the apartheid regime to an end. The BDS movement succeeded in framing the struggle of Palestinians within the human rights discourse as well discourses of antiracist, anticolonial and anti-apartheid movements.

The examples above show that the grassroots Palestinian human rights movement, either initiated by lawyers in the 1970s or by activists during the first Intifada and now under the BDS campaign, has been able to extend human rights beyond its legalistic, institutionalised and professionalised form, turning it into a form that is more in line with grassroots global, social and political movements. Palestinians managed to re-appropriate human rights through praxis. Moreover, these examples show that when Palestinians use the global human rights discourse, they anchor it in the struggles of other nations against colonialism and other forms of oppression.

In terms of HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, HRE resembles a confused vision, conceptualisation and implementation. While the PA is claiming to promote its integration of HRE in schools as an adherence to the global human rights discourse, this claim is proved false by the existence of a number of factors as discussed under sub-section (8.3.1). These factors are: the adoption of a decontextualised HRE, the violations committed by the Occupation on a daily basis, imposed external politics reflected through donors' politicised agendas, and PA oppressive policies and practices. Additionally, teachers' behaviour within schools, particularly the all boys school I discussed in chapter (6), contradicts the very basis of human rights as stated in school textbooks, increasing the localised and rooted skepticism and disbelief regarding human rights among young Palestinians.

In spite of the factors mentioned above and those discussed under sub-section (8.3.1), on the school level, some Palestinian teachers and students employ a number of strategies to re-claim HRE. These strategies can be amalgamated under four concepts: vernacularisation, Islamisation, hidden curriculum and struggle. These concepts emerged from the data analysis and were discussed in
detail in the analysis chapters (5), (6) and (7). However, in this section, I will show how these concepts are interlinked and interdependent and stress their importance and influence.

In practice, vernacularisation is tightly linked to both Islamisation, the hidden curriculum and values transmitted by teachers. The Islamisation of HRE starts at the MOE level. The MOE claims that using Islamic references to frame human rights in the civics textbooks is a way to bring global human rights vernacular closer to the dominant religion, culture, social values and practices in the Occupied West Bank. However, this is done in a way that ignores the diversity within Palestinian society and does not leave any margin or space for questioning or critically engaging with human rights concepts in the classroom. Once the origins of human rights are linked to the divine in textbooks, critique becomes a sin. Additionally, by linking human rights to Islam, as the dominant religion, the MOE does not only marginalise and omit other religions and belief systems that exist within Palestinian society, but also allows for wronging those rights that challenge practices and violations against certain groups such as women under the pretext of Islam. By doing so, through Islamising HRE in a way that serves the ruling party and patriarchal social structures, the MOE is allowing for injustice and discrimination to dominate and be reproduced in Palestinian society. Furthermore, while the MOE claims that by Islamising human rights it is bringing universal human rights language closer to the Palestinian context, it does not consider contextualising human rights within any other value systems which Palestinians hold closely such as Palestinian revolutionary culture and the struggle for liberation. By doing so, it is serving the agenda of the PA and the Occupation to tame Palestinian resistance. Also, by framing HRE within an interpretation of Islam that does not allow for criticality, they are able to maintain repressive and hierarchal social and cultural structures that serve to maintain the rule of the PA without resistance.

Through the hidden curriculum, school teachers in PA schools are accused of imposing their own political, religious or social agendas that contradict with human rights values and the basics of HRE. Critical academics and activists rarely praised teachers for disregarding politically motivated texts or concepts
from either the PA or donors, and using their own nationalist ideas to link HRE to students’ reality. As discussed in chapter (6), whether blamed or praised, the majority of teachers I interviewed and whose classes I attended, dealt with their cynical perceptions of human rights and HRE by using culturally specific and religious, mainly Islamic, references during civics classes to defy Western imposition as they claimed. The references the teachers used highlighted the idea that Islam in general and Palestinian culture in particular are not inferior to international human rights standards. Vernacularising human rights by using the language of Islam has a gender aspect. Some female teachers I interviewed used references from Islam to support women’s rights and prove that women’s rights are not a western notion. Hence, those female teachers are contributing to positive social change rather than perpetuating and reproducing prominent oppressive and patriarchal values and practices.

Struggle is an aspect manifested in the hidden curriculum through teachers’ defiant actions against the Occupation and the PA, and students’ human rights praxis in schools against the Occupation. Human rights praxis is rarely linked to the HRE provided in schools as HRE within the PA education system does not create or allow for that space where students can engage in human rights praxis, limiting their ability to dismantle structures of domination and oppression. The negative experience in school is what raises the consciousness of students about violations rather than the knowledge and skills provided at school. In this case, human rights praxis is linked to the culture of resistance and the need and willingness to end the system(s) of oppression.

8.4. Research Implications and Recommendations
This section highlights the main theoretical and practical implications of conducting this research as well as its findings as discussed above. Practically, the research has implications for the way HRE is understood, framed and implemented. The theoretical implications contribute to an emerging body of research and literature related to critical HRE and human rights praxis. A number of recommendations are also listed below.
While this thesis critically tackles HRE in PA schools in the Occupied West Bank and highlights its pitfalls, it does not mean that HRE should not take place within the schooling system. However, there are major reviews and considerations that need to be taken into account for an emancipatory HRE. Civics textbooks in terms of content, social, cultural and political orientation are difficult to change as they are tied to external powers, such as donor bodies, the will of the Occupier and an authoritarian regime, the PA, that will not change its education strategy to support the struggle of its people against the orders of the Occupation, which would hinder its ability to rule and its very existence.

Within such a challenging context, there is a substantial role for critical educators and researchers. As a way of moving forward, I suggest a number of precepts:

- The perception that culture is rigid, even when dominated and influenced by a particular religion, needs to be ruptured. Culture is changing and changeable. Within this understanding, HRE should allow for the struggle over rigid interpretations of religion, culture and social norms that support and perpetuate human rights violations. Rather, as the female teachers in my sample schools did, vernacularising the discourse of rights, even when using the language of religion, can be used to advance human rights and make HRE a tool for social change.

- Rethinking HRE in terms of its scope, vernacular forms, aims and pedagogy may actually result in something different than HRE. In contexts of grave violations and oppression, critical HRE or resistance education might be more suitable as pursuing other ethical discourses in such contexts requires moving beyond the scope of the term HRE itself.

- Acknowledging that HRE cannot be detached from the context. It is peoples’ experiences, knowledge, language and praxis that gives meaning to HRE. Hence, focus should be shifted away from the universal – local dichotomy. Alternatively, a continuous dialogue should take place on ways where universal human rights, rooted in peoples’ struggles, can be the basis of HRE. Consequently, ending the dominance of the top-down, institutionalised approached to HRE and advancing a form of HRE based on the experiences and indigenous knowledges of the people.
• HRE based on the global human rights regime should not be ignored or omitted, however, it can apply to various contexts by keeping in touch with the specificities of the context and the social, cultural and political particularities. Thus, HRE discourse and praxis are transformed into diverse tools which avoid the appropriation of imposed global frameworks that claim universality and the constant and consistent common good. This appropriation in effect ignores the diversity of knowledge and its relation to change over time.

• HRE particularly for and with young people should include the life experiences of these young people, particularly in the case of Palestine where young people are part of the daily and long-standing political, social and cultural struggle. Their wisdom and experiences should be considered as sources and insight rather than behaviour that needs rectifying.

• Within HRE, the struggles of the people should not be romanticised or be considered as having moral superiority, on the contrary, moral absolutism should be avoided when it comes to peoples’ struggles as much as it should be avoided when framing HRE within international human rights standards. HRE should allow for continuous critique through the employment of critical pedagogies. Through HRE we should learn to challenge our assumptions, in order then to contest [and change] the world (Baxi 1996).

• Rooting HRE within localised contexts and linking it to peoples’ struggles and daily experiences does not necessarily translate into the need to search for alternative types of knowledge. This means that there is a need to unearth pre-existing knowledges that have been ignored or sidelined by dominant power structures. By doing so, localised experiences can be deterrioralised and the vernacular of the struggle of the people and the tools they use for emancipation and to defy sources of oppression can translate into a universal language that is considered legitimate rather than simply legal.
In order to operationalise the findings of this thesis moving from problematising to reclaiming to operationalising HRE in the Occupied West Bank, where HRE is a tool for change, there is a need to create a model that allows for establishing spaces where Palestinians collectively find ways to transform and/or dismantle the structures of oppression. While HRE in PA schools as it stands now does not allow for the creation of those spaces, it is important to acknowledge that the introduction of human rights language through HRE curricula is a significant step towards achieving the identification of violations, prevention and protection. However, to reach inclusive praxis and overcome cynicism there is a need to create alternative structures to schools. With the shrinking role of the PA due to the uncertainties of the political context, Palestinians maybe able to form inclusive community based and led programmes of critical HRE or resistance education. These programmes can build on previous indigenous experiences as well as experiences of other nations and groups where education was utilised as a tool to struggle for justice. By creating this model, credibility, sustainability, ownership and participation will ensure that human rights consciousness is popularised.

8.5. Suggestions for Further Research

This study advances previous research in the field of HRE, particularly HRE designed and implemented in contexts of political and ideological conflicts and violent change. It also illuminates the importance of conducting research on HRE with a critical lens. In doing so, this research enables a deeper and more nuanced understanding of some of the contextual and ideological struggles taking place over the very notion of human rights and consequently HRE, and also highlights the complex factors influencing the shape and aims of HRE; its meaning; and the lacking link between HRE as it stands today and the peoples’ struggle for real change. Finally, the fact that this critical research on HRE has taken place in the multilayered context of a colonial Occupation, military rule, apartheid and authoritarian local government makes it unique and unprecedented. This final point lead to exposing a number of issues that need further research, namely:

- Hindering and enhancing factors of HRE such as the gendered roles of policy makers, teachers and students
• The sources and impacts of violence on HRE. This research unearthed various forms of violence in schools, particularly boys’ schools. Paradoxically, violence in some cases did not hinder HRE, but in actuality lead to HRE praxis.

• Critical HRE and its potential role in advancing the resistance in Palestine against the Occupation and other forms of oppression.

• Comparing and contrasting HRE within the different segregated geographical areas of Palestine and within Palestinian communities in the diaspora.

• Comparing and contrasting HRE in Palestine with other models of HRE in similar contexts, where a political settlement has been reached but the impact of the conflict, and sometimes the conflict itself, persists in different shapes and forms, affecting HRE, such as is the case in South Africa and Northern Ireland.

• Ways in which HRE can support the ongoing non-violent popular resistance that is taking place inside historic Palestine and in the diaspora, such as the BDS movement.

Further research is also needed by using alternative methods that take HRE research away from mainstream quantitative research and reporting that is dominant in the OPT to more critical, decolonised research that is independent from political agendas and prioritises the voices and experiences of the research participants. Research that is inside facing rather than outside serving.

8.6. Conclusion
When I set out to conduct this research my aim was to provide an understanding of the reasons behind integrating HRE within PA schools in the Occupied West Bank, identifying and explaining perceptions around human rights and HRE particularly in the school context and finally identifying potential links between HRE and the struggle for social and political change. My field visits were an eye opener, forcing me to realise that a simple understanding, explanation or identification of HRE does not suffice in a context that challenges the norms of direct causalities and single angle views. This research is in effect a critique that
allows for the problematisation of HRE and offers alternatives based on indigenous knowledge and experiences to reclaim and re-appropriate it.

This research takes the understanding of HRE beyond its universal institutionalisation and standardisation of human rights. Rather, it shows that institutionalising the experiences of human rights struggle(s) whether on the international or the local level allows for the appropriation of the very notion and emancipatory aims of HRE. It renders HRE a tool for political and ideological indoctrination and hegemonic domination. This is exacerbated by the lack of spaces for critique and questioning. This situation creates HRE that is not only perceived with cynicism and ridicule by those who are struggling for their rights but it also turns HRE into a harmful tool in the hands of those in power. Reverting to alternative sources of knowledge and linking human rights with the vernacular of the people, adopting a bottom-up approach to human rights and allowing for criticality is necessary to enable the re-appropriation of human rights by subalterns, where HRE becomes a true strategy to build a culture of human rights that can dismantle structures of oppression.

Through this research, I aim to provoke reflections and reconsiderations of the way HRE is currently being conceptualised and implemented, particularly by human rights and education researchers and practitioners. The idea that pupils and educators are passive recipients of hegemonic curricula imposed by the state and can therefore do nothing about the role of education in reproducing social inequalities is essentially flawed (Pherali 2013). Hence, HRE is not and should not be conceptualised and implemented in an assumed vacuum but in a context with powerful factors such as religion, social and cultural norms, political agendas and gender, that shape its aims and impact. In this research I highlight the power of people’s agency, where no matter how HRE is shaped at the top, there is always a way for individuals and groups to alter it to serve their own purposes and fit it within their value systems and structures. In this thesis, I have shown that the true universal human rights are the ones that stem from the struggles of the people, respect their diversity and link to their needs and aspirations. Human rights are not those that treat people as homogeneous groups with cultures and values inferior to standardised human rights, in need of
taming and behaviour alterations through top-down HRE, without considering the diversity of cultures, contexts and struggles of these peoples.

In this thesis, I have shown that there is a need to rethink HRE as a concept in theory and practice, shifting its current reality to one that contributes to building ‘critical consciousness’. This shift, particularly in the case of Palestine, will not emerge without resistance and struggle, as developing forms of education that lead to challenging deep-rooted structures of oppression will be considered radical, destructive and problematic. However, as critical educators and researchers, it is our responsibility to take on this inevitable battle.
APPENDICIES

Appendix (1): Interviews and Observations Schedule

1. Interviews Schedule for the Pilot Field Visit (2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Participant/ Institution</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date &amp; time of interview</th>
<th>Data generated</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Human Rights and Advocacy Project Manager</td>
<td>Palestinian Youth NGO</td>
<td>Based in Ramallah-Project implemented in the whole of the West Bank</td>
<td>31 March (9:00 -10:04)</td>
<td>Audio recorded interview and Monitoring &amp; Evaluation System for the Education Development Strategic Plan 2008-2012</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>MOE official (1)</td>
<td>Ministry of Education/Curriculum Center</td>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td>1 April (8:55-10:00)</td>
<td>Audio recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>West Ramallah Youth Center</td>
<td>Independent Village West Ramallah</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 April (12:13-13:32)</td>
<td>Audio recorded discussion, two sheets used for student activities</td>
<td>11 (9 students, one activist and a young journalist) All the participants signed the ethics form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Academic (1)</td>
<td>Department of Education, Birzeit University</td>
<td>Birzeit /Ramallah</td>
<td>3 April (11:00-11:30)</td>
<td>Field notes Suggestions for possible participants and books to read: Meet with Save the Children Read the book: Teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Youth Political Activist</td>
<td>Political Activist/Fatah</td>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td>7 April (10:00-11:46)</td>
<td>Audio recorded interview and information about facebook pages related to activism</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Senior Administrator</td>
<td>Ibn Rushd Unit/Department of Education/Birzeitu University</td>
<td>Birzeit/Ramallah</td>
<td>8 April (10:06-10:44)</td>
<td>Audio recorded interview and a number of BZU research documents related to human rights and democracy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Academic (2)</td>
<td>Democracy and human rights programme, Birzeit University</td>
<td>Birzeit/Ramallah</td>
<td>8 April (11:00-12:00)</td>
<td>Field notes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Academic (3)</td>
<td>Women Studies Department / Birzeitu University</td>
<td>Birzeit / Ramallah</td>
<td>8 April (13:00-13:30)</td>
<td>Field notes, programme of the conference (Education for Freedom and Social Justice) and abstracts of the following papers presented at the conference</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Palestinian NGO</td>
<td>Ramallah</td>
<td>9 April (10:30-12:00)</td>
<td>Audio recorded</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>MOE Official (2)</td>
<td>Civics Inspector - Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Qalqilia / North of the West Bank</td>
<td>10 April (11:46 – 12:17)</td>
<td>Audio recorded interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls School / Village near Qalqilia</td>
<td>Girls School / Village near Qalqilia</td>
<td>PA School</td>
<td>Village/Qalqilia</td>
<td>Village/Qalqilia</td>
<td>10 April (10:35 -11:20)</td>
<td>Audio recorded discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>Girls School / Village near Qalqilia</td>
<td>PA School</td>
<td>Village/Qalqilia</td>
<td>2 teachers and 4 students</td>
<td>All the students signed the ethics form in addition to the teachers and the head-teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>Academic (4)</td>
<td>Ibn Rushd Unit/ Department of Education/ Birzeit University</td>
<td>Birzeit/Ramallah</td>
<td>11 April (12:28- 13:12)</td>
<td>Audio recorded interview He suggested I meet with Dr. Naeem Abu Al Homos ex-Minister of Education during the second PA cabinet, currently a lecturer at BZU</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## 2. Interview Schedule for Main Field Visit (2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participant/Institution</th>
<th>Duration of Interview/ focus group</th>
<th>Type of Data Generated</th>
<th>No. of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 February</td>
<td>Education Palestinian NGO (1) – Interview with the director</td>
<td>14:00-15:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 February</td>
<td>MOE – Interview with Senior MOE employee</td>
<td>10:00-11:30</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 February</td>
<td>MOE – Meeting with staff responsible for coordination with NGOs and other institutions</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Written notes – information about schools, determined schools to be visited and contact people</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 March</td>
<td>Palestinian Human Rights organisation – Interview with a documentation specialist</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Written notes, the participant provided me with contacts who I can approach in relation to an HRE project in PA schools</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 March</td>
<td>Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights/ National Human rights institution – Interview with one of the awareness raising coordinators</td>
<td>14:00-15:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 March</td>
<td>Palestinian NGO specialised in transparency and anti-corruption – Interview with the coordinator with schools’ project</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview and training material produced by the NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 March</td>
<td>International Childs Rights NGO – Interview with the Education Officer</td>
<td>8:00-10:30</td>
<td>Recorded interview, written notes and documents and reports produced by</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 March</td>
<td>Palestinian Community Theater – Interview with the Director</td>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview and reports and brochures produced by the Theater</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 March</td>
<td>Birzeit University – Interview with Academic at the Law Institute</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Notes taken during the interview and the draft national human rights action plan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 March</td>
<td>Political Youth Activists</td>
<td>15:00-16:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 March</td>
<td>UN Agency – Interview with two education officers</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 March</td>
<td>Palestinian Education NGO – Interview with the HRE programme Manager</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview and preparation for a joint HRE workshop</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 March</td>
<td>Palestinian Education and Cultural NGO – Interview with the Head of the Education Department</td>
<td>13:00-14:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview, documents and reports produced by the NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Academic from Birzeit University/ Continious Education Centre</td>
<td>10:00-1:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview and sample teacher training manuals</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>International Child’s Rights NGO - Interview with the Child Rights Officer</td>
<td>8:00 – 11:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview, written notes and documents produced by the INGO, other NGOs and Palestinian academics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>Ramallah Municipality – Manager of the Youth</td>
<td>12:00-13:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview and</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Notes/Details</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 April</td>
<td>Palestinian Women’s Rights NGO- Interview with one of the Projects’ Officers</td>
<td>15:00-15:30</td>
<td>Notes from the interview and documents produced by the NGO</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 April</td>
<td>UN Agency Interview with the Education Officer</td>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Notes from the interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 April</td>
<td>Workshop with Various Education (I) NGOs</td>
<td>10:00-13:00</td>
<td>Notes from the workshop</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>MOE- Interview with one of the Education Supervisors</td>
<td>8:00-9:00</td>
<td>Notes from the interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April</td>
<td>Palestinian Development NGO</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April</td>
<td>International NGO working on Child’s Rights – Interview with a Legal Advisor</td>
<td>9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Recorded Interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>Palestinian Human Rights NGO – Interview with the Director</td>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 April</td>
<td>Education and Gender Expert</td>
<td>19:00-20:00</td>
<td>Recorded Skype interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 April</td>
<td>International Education NGO- Interview with the Education Project Manager</td>
<td>10:00-11:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 April</td>
<td>Al Najah University – Interview with an Academic (Civics Education Specialist)</td>
<td>8:00-10:00</td>
<td>Recorded interview and various publications based on the participants academic work</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 April</td>
<td>National Teachers Training Institute – Interview with the Director and Projects manager</td>
<td>11:00-13:00</td>
<td>Recorded interviews</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date (2014)</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Activity (Interviews/Focus Groups/Observations)</td>
<td>Type of Data Generated</td>
<td>No. of Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 March</td>
<td>West Ramallah Mixed School</td>
<td>Interviews and school Observation</td>
<td>Recorded interviews, notes taken during overall school observation and 8th grade students drawings</td>
<td>3 individule interviews with (Headteacher, secretary and civics teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 March</td>
<td>South of Nablus Boys School</td>
<td>Interviews and school Observation</td>
<td>Recorded interviews and notes taken during overall school observation</td>
<td>2 individule interviews with (Secretary and civics teacher)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 March</td>
<td>West Ramallah Mixed School</td>
<td>3 Classroom observations (7th, 8th and 9th grades) and discussions with teachers</td>
<td>Notes from the whole school observation, and classroom observation sheets</td>
<td>2 teachers (English and Civics) and observation of civics education classes (7th, 8th and 9th grades) 7th grade: 25 students, 8th grade: 18 students and 9th grade:15 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March</td>
<td>South of Nablus Boys School</td>
<td>Informal discussions with Headteacher, deputy headteacher and interview with civics teacher and classroom observation</td>
<td>Notes taken from classroom observation and observation sheets, notes taken during whole school observation and meeting with Headteacher</td>
<td>(3) Headteacher, Deputy headteacher and Civics teacher, and observation of civics class for 9th grade (a) 9th (a) grade students: 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 March</td>
<td>West</td>
<td>Interview with the civics</td>
<td>Notes from (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>Notes/Interviews</td>
<td>Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Mar</td>
<td>Ramallah Mixed School</td>
<td>Teacher, informal meeting with Headteacher and classroom observations</td>
<td>Interview with Civics teacher, informal meeting with the headteacher and three observation sheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Mar</td>
<td>Hebron Girls’ School</td>
<td>Informal meeting Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, interview with civics teacher (1) and 9th grade civics class observation</td>
<td>Notes from meeting with Headteacher and Deputy headteacher, recorded interview with Civics teacher (1) and classroom observation sheet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Mar</td>
<td>West Ramallah Mixed School</td>
<td>Whole school observation, focus group with 9th grade students, classroom observations 7th and 9th grades, and interview with Social Worker</td>
<td>Recorded interview with Social Worker, notes based on whole school observation and classroom observation sheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Apr</td>
<td>Hebron Girls’ School</td>
<td>Whole School observation, classroom observations and interview with Civics teacher (2)</td>
<td>Recorded interview with Civics teacher, Notes from whole school observation and classroom observation sheets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Apr</td>
<td>South of Nablus Boys School</td>
<td>Whole school observation, Interview with Social Worker, and Focus Group with 9th</td>
<td>Recorded interview with the Social Worker, 1 Civics teacher, two classroom observations 9th grade (a): 35 9th grade (b): 37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Social worker and 6 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>School Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Notes</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 April</td>
<td>Hebron Girls’ School</td>
<td>Whole school observation, interview with Civics teacher (2), interview with Social Worker and a Focus Group with 9th grade (b) students</td>
<td>Notes from the whole school observation, recorded interviews with civics teacher and social worker and recorded Focus Group Session</td>
<td>1 Civics teacher, 1 Social Worker and 12 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix (2): Research Information Sheet

(English)

INFORMATION SHEET

Title of the Research Project: Human Rights Education in the Occupied West Bank/Palestine: Between the Vision and the Reality

About the Research
Mai Abu Moghli is conducting this field research as part of her PhD degree at the Institute of Education/University of London.

Research Questions

- What are the sources of influence that shape human rights education in Palestinian Authority (PA) schools in the West Bank?
- Considering the Palestinian context, what are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the West Bank about human rights?
- To what extent does Human Rights Education (HRE) inform students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the occupied West Bank?

To Answer these Questions....

Mai will generate data from the field through conducting in-depth semi structured interviews and focus groups. These individual and group interviews will be conducted with a number of stakeholders. Mai will also be conducting classroom observations. The observations will take place in three selected schools in covering the North, middle and south of the West Bank. The observations will be during citizenship education classes for the 9th grade.

In addition to the interviews, focus groups and classroom observations, Mai will be analyzing the citizenship education books for the grades 7,8 and 9. Also, the she will analyze the Palestinian Ministry of Education policy documents, particularly those related to human rights education. As well as a thorough literature review covering issues related to education in Palestine, the Palestinian curriculum, education in conflict and post-conflict countries, HRE and social change.

Use of Data and Anonymity
The data generated in the field will be made anonymous and will be used primarily for the purposes of the PhD thesis in addition to producing academic papers and presenting at academic conferences.

For further question please do not hesitate to contact Mai Abu Moghli by email: mabumoghli@ioe.ac.uk
Appendix (3) Questionnaires
List of Questions Used during Interviews

1. Pilot Field Research Visit (2013)

Ministry of Education
- Why does the Ministry highlight human rights and human rights standard as a priority in its strategies since the creation of the PA?
- How are human rights standards integrated into the curriculum?
- Are you happy about the implementation in schools?
- What do you think teachers’ perceptions are in relation to human rights?
- What do you think students think about human rights?
- Do you find any challenges when dealing with human rights issues in schools?
- Does the Ministry intend to make any changes in its strategy concerning learning and teaching about human rights in its new strategy 2013-2018?

Palestinian NGOs
- What do you think about the education system in Palestine?
- Where does human rights sit within the education system in Palestine?
- Why do you think the Ministry identified the integration of human rights standards in the curriculum as a priority?
- What is the role of your organization in the Palestinian education system?
- Do you think integrating human rights into the curriculum is making any difference? Does it have any impact? (Why/not)
- Any challenges to implementing human rights education program in Palestinian schools?
- How do you assess the impact of human rights education in Palestine (formal and/or informal)

Young Activists
- What do you think about the Palestinian Education System?
- What is your role in terms of human rights education?
- How do you think human rights are perceived and understood in Palestine in general?
- How do you think teachers and students perceive human rights?
- Why did you choose to work in the field of human rights education?
- Do you face any challenges in your work? What type of challenges?
- Where did you learn about human rights? (school, home, public, workshops?)

School Students
- What do you talk about in civics classes?
- What methods do teachers use?
- Do you think these topics are relevant to your life?
- Anything you like to change?
• Why do you think they included these topics?
• Does it relate to your life?
• What do you think about education in Palestine?
• What do you think about human rights?
• Do you have any activities out-side of school? What?

2. Main Field Research Visit (2014)

Research Questions
• What are the sources of influence that shape human rights education in PA schools in the West Bank?
• Considering the Palestinian context, what are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the West Bank about human rights?
• To what extent does HRE inform students’ engagement in social and/or political activism in the occupied West Bank?

Interviews Schedule

Schools
• Head-teachers
  - Can you tell me about civics education in your school?
  - How many civics teachers do you have?
  - Do they teach other topics?
  - How do you select teachers to teach civics? What’s their specialty?
  - How many civics classes do students take every week?
  - Do teachers receive any professional training in general, and/or related to civics in particular?
  - If yes, who provides the training? What type of training?
  - If no, how do teachers deal with the new civics curriculum and how do they approach controversial issues?
  - What do you think about the human rights topics included in the civics curriculum/textbooks?
  - Are human rights included in other topics ( say national education, languages …)?
  - Why do you think human rights was included in the curriculum?
  - What do you think about human rights?
  - Is it important for students to learn about human rights?
  - Are there any challenges that teachers face when discussing human rights topics with the students?
  - What do you think about human rights education? What does it mean to you?
  - How does human rights link to the lives of the students and teachers?
  - What other value education exist in your school ( religious education, environmental education, health education, sex education…)?
  - Do teacher receive any training to be able to teach these topics?
  - What is the ethos of your school?
- Have you heard about a programme called the human rights friendly schools? If yes do you think your school could be one? If not, what do you think this programme means to schools?
- Do you have students with disabilities?
- Do you have teachers with disabilities?
- Do you have students from religious or ethnic minorities?
- What is the relation between your school and the local community?
- Do students engage in project within the community?
- Do people from NGOs or other bodies / institutions visit your school? Why?
- Do you have a students’ council? If yes, tell me about it, if no, why not?
- When an event like an Israeli aggression take place in or around the school or affect the student’s life and safety, do you talk about it? How do you deal with it?
- As there are many disruptions in the schooling day, do you normally keep the civics class or do you substitute it with something else?
- Do students get to visit different organizations in relation to their lessons? Do visitors come to the school to talk about certain issues? Why? Why not?

• Teachers
- Can you tell me about civics education in your school?
- Are you the only civics teacher in the school?
- Do you teach other topics?
- Why were you selected to teach civics?
- What’s your specialty? Where were you trained to become a teacher?
- Why did you become a teacher?
- Which grades do you teach?
- How many civics classes do students take every week?
- Have you received any professional training in general, and/or related to civics in particular?
- If yes, who provides the training? What type of training?
- If no, how do you deal with the new civics curriculum and how do you approach controversial issues?
- Is there a teacher’s guide?
- How do you plan your class? What is your teaching style?
- Why do you chose these methods?
- What teaching methods do you use in the civics classes?
- What do you think about the human rights topics included in the civics curriculum/textbooks?
- Why do you think human rights was included in the curriculum?
- Are human rights included in other topics, other than civics ( say national education, languages …)?
- What do you think about human rights?
- Is it important for students to learn about human rights?
- Are there any challenges that you face when discussing human rights topics with the students?
- What do you think about human rights education? What does it mean to you?
- How does human rights link to the lives of the students and teachers?
- What other value education exist in your school (religious education, environmental education, health education, sex education…)?
- What is the ethos of the school?
- Have you heard about a programme called the human rights friendly schools? If yes do you think your school could be one? If not, what do you think this programme means to schools?
- Do you have students with disabilities?
- Do you have students from religious or ethnic minorities?
- What is the relation between your school and the local community?
- Do students engage in project within the community?
- Do people from NGOs or other bodies / institutions visit your school? Why?
- Do you have a students’ council? If yes, tell me about it, if no, why not?
- Do you conduct any activities outside of the classroom/school? If yes what kind of activities? If no, why not?
- Do you face any challenges when you conduct extracurricular activities? If yes, how do you handle them?
- There is a human rights competition for schools that the ministry runs every year, do you know about it? If yes, do your students take part?
- There are NGOs that run human rights projects for young people do you know about them? Any of your students are engaged in anything like that?
- When an event like an Israeli aggression take place in or around the school or affect the student’s life and safety, do you talk about it? How do you deal with it?
- As there are many disruptions in the schooling day, are civics classes constant? Are they substituted? How do you feel about that?
- Do students get to visit different organizations in relation to their lessons? Do visitors come to the school to talk about certain issues? Why? Why not?

- Focus groups with students
  - What do you think about your civics classes?
  - How many civics classes do you have a week?
  - What methods do the teachers use in the civics classes?
  - What topics do you discuss in the civics classes?
  - What do you think about human rights topics you study within civics?
  - Are human rights included in other topics, other than civics (say national education, languages …)?
  - Do you think studying about human rights is important? Why? Why not?
- What are the topics you enjoy most in civics?
- Do they relate to your life? If yes how, if no why not?
- Do you think human rights is important for Palestinians? For Palestinian youth in particular? Why, why not?
- Are you engaged in your community?
- Do you take part in extra-curricular activities? Why? Why not?
- If you do, are there any challenges?
- Are you happy with the teaching method in the civics class? If yes why? If no, why not and how do you suggest they improve?
- Do you have visitors from NGOs? Or other institutions?
- If yes, what do they do?
- Do you face any problems on your way to school?
- What do you think about some topics like women’s rights, equality, death penalty, freedom of expression?
- What do you think about human rights and human rights violations in Palestine?
- Do you think young people have a role in making change? Why, why not and how?
- What kind of change would you like to make if any?
- What are the main values that you believe in? why?
- How do you develop these values?
- Where do you learn most about human rights? (school, friends, home...)
- Do you feel that the human rights topics you learn about in school are related to your life?
- Do you think that the human rights values you learn in the civics classes are in line in what you experience in school or in life in general?
- Why do you think you learn about human rights?
- There is a human rights competition for schools that the ministry runs every year, do you know about it? If yes, do you take part?
- There are NGOs that run human rights projects for young people do you know about them? Any of you are engaged in anything like that?
- Who determines the topics, activities and extra curricular activities related to the human rights topics?
- Do you talk to your teachers or someone in school about the problems you face because of the occupation? About the incidents that happen? Like an attack on the school from settlers and so on?
- As there are many disruptions in the schooling day, are civics classes constant? Are they substituted? How do you feel about that?
- What's the difference in your opinion between the civics education and national education? Which is more important?
- Do you get to visit different organizations in relation to their lessons? Do visitors come to the school to talk about certain issues? Why? Why not?
Ministry of Education

- Head of the Humanities department
  - What topics fall under humanities in the Palestinian education system?
  - What values, in your opinion, are included in humanities?
  - What made the ministry include human rights in the humanities curriculum/textbooks?
  - Are human rights included in other topics, other than civics (say national education, languages...)?
  - Are there values in the humanities curriculum that contradict and/or complement human rights?
  - When human rights were included in the curriculum, what was the vision?
  - Who was involved in creating the humanities curriculum, particularly civics where HRE is part?
  - What do you think about the implementation?
  - Are there gaps/pitfalls/challenges? Why?
  - Are there differences (based on geographical areas, gender, socio-economic backgrounds...)?
  - What is it that you aim to see/accomplish with the students through HRE?
  - Do you face resistance from teachers, students or even policy makers when it comes to HRE?
  - Do you have any evaluation in relation to the implementation of HRE?
  - Does the Ministry intend to make any changes in its strategy concerning learning and teaching about human rights in its new strategy 2013-2018?
  - What about the human rights competition that the ministry runs every year, can you tell me about it?

- Head of the teacher's training department
  - Can you please tell me about the civics teachers in Palestinian schools? What is their background? Do they only give civics or do they teach other topics?
  - How long have teachers been teaching civics in PA schools?
  - How do teachers approach human rights topics in the classroom?
  - From your experience, what do teachers think about including human rights topics in the curriculum/textbooks?
  - What kind of teaching methods/pedagogy is used in the classroom especially during civics classes?
  - Have teachers received any training?
  - Who is responsible for teachers training (Professional development)?
  - Does the ministry cooperate with NGOs? If yes which ones and why?
  - Are they all Palestinian NGOs or do you cooperate with international NGOs?
  - How do teachers approach controversial issues in the classroom?
- What are the challenges that face teachers in general and when teaching human rights topics in particular?
- Have you witnessed any changes in teachers view to human rights issues since these topics were included in the civics curriculum?

- **Public Relations Officer**
  - How do you assess the level of cooperation between the ministry and NGOs (Palestinian and international)?
  - On what issues do they cooperate?
  - What about human rights education?
  - What are the perceptions of ministry staff (policy makers, teachers, head-teachers, …) in relation to human rights issues in the Palestinian curriculum?
  - Are there any challenges that arise when there is work between the ministry and external partners especially in relation to HRE?
  - What’s the level of influence (if any) of civil society actors on the work of the ministry?
  - How do you assess the influence of donor funding to the ministry?
  - Are schools open to the local community? If yes, how? If no, why not?
  - Does the ministry have any awareness campaigns related to human rights in schools? If yes, like what and how are they conducted? Why? And on what topics? If no, why not?

**Representatives from Political Parties**
- What is the position of Palestinian political parties towards international human rights standards?
- What do you think the role of education in Palestine is (aside from literacy and numeracy)?
- Does education happen outside of schools? Where?
- Do political parties provide education? Awareness raising?
- Do political parties engage with students in schools?
- Do you think political parties should have a role in educational institutions in Palestine? Why/why not?
- What do you think about HRE in PA schools?
- What do you think the relation between HRE and political education/awareness?
- How is that related to education, if there is any relation?

**Religious Figures**
- What is the position of Islam/Christianity in regards to human rights?
- What do you think is the relation between human rights and religious education in schools?
- What do you think the role of education in Palestine is (aside from literacy and numeracy)?
- Does education happen outside of schools? Where?
- Do mosques/churches provide education? Awareness raising?
- What do you think about HRE in schools?
- Are there any contradictions between HRE and religious education in schools?
- What is the aim of values education in schools?
- How does values education link to the life of young people in Palestine?
- Do religious institutions have any influence on education in Palestine? If yes how, if no why not?
- What about religious minorities in Palestine? Do you think they are represented in the education system? Should they be? Is there discrimination?
- What about controversial issues like women rights, death penalty, do you think they should be discussed in classrooms? Why? Why not?

**Youth Activists**
- What kind of activism are you involved in? why did you chose to do that?
- Is there any link between human rights standards and your activism? If yes how? If no, why not?
- How did you acquire your knowledge about human rights?
- Do you face any challenges in your work? What type of challenges?
- What do you think about the Palestinian Education System?
- What do you know about HRE in PA schools?
- What is your role in terms of HRE?
- How do you think human rights are perceived and understood in Palestine in general?
- How do you think teachers and students perceive human rights?
- What do you think of the role of young people in the Palestinian society?
- Are young people given a chance to participate in decisions making in Palestine? How? Why? Why not?

**Curriculum Specialists**
- What do you think about the Palestinian education system?
- What was your role in the Palestinian curriculum?
- How were you selected? And who by?
- How do you assess the new Palestinian curriculum, particularly the civics curriculum?
- Is the new curriculum in line with the vision of the Ministry that is stated in the strategy documents?
- What are the sources of influence in relation to the Palestinian curriculum?
- Do you think the new civics curriculum is important? Why / why not?
- What was the reason behind including human rights in the civics curriculum?
- How do you assess the teaching and learning in PA schools in relation to the civics curriculum?
- Did you face any challenges when putting together the civics curriculum and textbooks? If any, how did you over come the challenges?
- Do you think there are any changes that need to take place in the civics curriculum?
- What are the measures that were taken to prepare the teachers and students for the new civics curriculum?
- Do you think the writing of the new civics curriculum was done in a participatory way? If yes how? If no why not?
- Who was involved in the writing of the curriculum other than the ministry and the specialists like yourself?

**Representatives from NGOs**
- Palestinian NGOs
  - What do you think about the education system in Palestine?
  - Where does human rights sit within the education system in Palestine?
  - Why do you think the Ministry identified the integration of human rights standards in the curriculum as a priority?
  - What is the role of your organization in the Palestinian education system?
  - Do you think integrating human rights into the curriculum is making any difference? Does it have any impact? (Why/not)
  - Do you think human rights are seen as a separate topic in the curriculum or do you think there are other aspects?
  - Any challenges to implementing human rights education program in Palestinian schools?
  - What do you think the impacts of integrating human rights into the schooling system in Palestine are? (if any)
  - What do you think about human rights education programmes provided by NGOs (informal education)?
  - What do you think in the role of the civil society (including political parties and religious groups) in the Palestinian education system?
  - What do you think is the role of donors/ funding governments in the Palestinian education system?
  - When you work with young people on human rights education activities, what are the challenges you face?
  - Do you feel they have enough knowledge and skills regarding human rights?

- International NGOs
  - What do you think about the education system in Palestine?
  - Where does human rights sit within the education system in Palestine?
  - Why do you think the Ministry identified the integration of human rights standards in the curriculum as a priority?
  - What is the role of your organization in the Palestinian education system?
  - Do you think integrating human rights into the curriculum is making any difference? Does it have any impact? (Why/not)
  - Any challenges to implementing human rights education program in Palestinian schools?
  - How do you assess the impact of human rights education in Palestine (formal and/or informal)
  - What do you think in the role of the civil society (including political parties and religious groups) in the Palestinian education system?
  - What do you think is the role of donors/ funding governments in the Palestinian education system?
Appendix (4): Transcriber’s Agreement

Transcription of Audio Interviews

Task: Transcription of approximately 20 hours of one–to-one audio recorded interviews
Transcriber: Yaser Salah
Rate: £20/ audio hour

Anonymity and discretion
The information provided by the interviewees is sensitive and should be kept discrete and anonymous. The transcriber should not share the audio files or the transcriptions with anyone. All information provided in the interviews should not be disclosed to a third party.

Protections and storage of data
The audio files will be shared through dropbox. The audio files should remain in the dropbox and not be deleted. The transcription folders to be shared with the researcher (Mai Abu Moghli), through dropbox and via email.

Delivery and timeframe
The researcher will share the audio files with the transcriber on Monday the 23rd of June. The transcriber to finalize all the transcriptions by Tuesday 15 July 2014.

The transcriber is expected to transcribe audio-recorded one-to-one interviews into written Arabic. The timing of the start and the end of the interviews to be recorded. Language used by both the interviewed and the interviewee to be transcribed with no changes. English words within the Arabic speech to be kept without translation.

Payment
The researcher will make the full payment of £400 to the transcriber upon delivery of all the transcriptions on the agreed date (above). The payment will only be made if the quality of the transcriptions was satisfactory i.e. no missing information, clarity in format and inclusion of all the details mentioned and stated during the audio-recorded interview.

Signature of transcriber

Date
Appendix (5): Photos of Activities

Where do you learn about Human Rights? What does the term Human Rights mean to you?
Appendix (6): Classroom Observation Form

Front Side (Main Questions)


2. Learning through human rights: What is the relation between the students and the teacher? Describe the classroom set up and activities used including pedagogy. Is it student centered or teacher centered? What is the learning environment like? Are there any participatory approaches used? Any discussions? Any space and time for students to express their views?

3. Learning for human rights: Is there linking between human rights issues taught and learnt with the student’s daily life and activism (if any)? do teachers make that link? do students discuss it?
Appendix (7): Field notes/ Memo Excerpt

Field research Memo
West Bank / Palestine
Week (3): 10-17 March 2014

Monday March 10th: Boyes School / South Nablus (Second visit)

This was my second visit to the school. During this visit I stayed from 9:30 – 14:00. I met with the Head Teacher (HT) and talked to him informally as he was busy and I interviewed the civics teacher (Ahmed). And I observed the civics class for the 9th grade (a) class was on Rights of People with Disabilities.

When I arrived I met with the HT who was friendly and welcomed me to his new office in the newly built part of the school which is not finished yet. They do not have electricity yet but I saw builders working. I introduced myself and my research to the HT and gave him my card, information sheet and consent form. He said that they are ready to help in any way possible.

The civics teacher (Ahmed) was waiting for me in the HT office and we were ready to start the interview when we were interrupted by an incident. A teacher, who can not be older than 30, came into the HT’s office holding a student from the collar of his jacket. The teacher had a black tube like stick in his hand and the student was rubbing the upper part of his leg, which indicated the student was beaten by the teacher with he stick on that area of his body. The teacher saw me and the civics teacher in the HT’s office so he said the HT that he will come back later. The HT realized that myself and the civics teacher were waiting for an explanation, at least out of curiosity from the civics teacher’s side and out of researcher’s need of knowing and understanding from my side. The HT at that point looked and me and said sarcastically ‘this is human rights you see!’ and smiled. The HT realized that I noticed the act of beating so he said (I think to justify): In Islam we have *Tadaroj fee al okoubat*, which means: gradual development in punishments. I am guessing he wanted to say that beating the student with the stick was not the teacher’s first choice. The HT said that behind this incident there is a story. The 9th grade (which the beaten student belonged to) had a problem with the maths teacher in the morning. One of the students whistled. The teacher asked who was it, the students refused to say. So the teacher implemented collective punishment! (The term collective punishment was repeated a number of times that day). The civics teacher and the HT said that this happen often, when one of the students does something wrong (according to them), his friends and classmates do not say who it was (this is an important point of solidarity that I will focus on in the focus groups). The teachers do threaten with collective punishment to make the students tell about each other.

The father of the student who eventually was found to be whistling (the HT asked the students to write who did it on a piece of paper without identifying themselves) and the majority of the class singled out this child. (This is to be discussed in details – the values behind this pressure). Also the HT told the Students (God is watching you and you will be judged by him if you don’t write the truth on the piece of paper). The father of the student said: I know that my son is going out with a group of kids I don’t like. I am part of the Fatah structure (*Tanzeem*) and I asked the young men who are part of the *Tanzeem* to follow my son’s movements.
Appendix (8): Sample Informed Consent Form

(English)

Name
Institution
Department
Date

Dear ..............

I am a PhD student at the Institute of Education, University of London. My research focus is human rights education in Palestine. I am particularly focusing on PA schools in the West Bank. My research is purely qualitative and I am conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders who work in the field of Education and Human Rights Education in Palestine. I am also hoping to meet with head teachers, teachers and students in selected schools.

I would like to know about human rights in the Palestinian curriculum, how is it presented, what are the perceptions about human rights in the curriculum and in general among teachers and students. I will be including the findings in my PhD thesis that hopefully will inform the education policy in Palestine in the future. Also the findings (data kept anonymous) will be used to publish academic journals and shared in academic conferences.

This interview will not take more than an hour. If you are happy to help me with my research, kindly sign the consent form below.

Thank you
Mai Abu Moghli

**Consent Form**
I am happy to take part in this interview conducted with Ms. Mai Abu Moghli. I have no problem in this interview being recorded

Print Name:________________________
Designation:________________________
Date:________________________
Signature:________________________
اسمي م. أبو مغلي، أنا طالب دكتوراة في معهد التربية، جامعة لندن.

من خلال البحث، يتم التركيز على التربية على حقوق الإنسان في مدارس السلطة الفلسطينية في الضفة الغربية المحتلة.

سوف يتم إجراء مقابلات مع المعلمين والمديرين والمدارس والطلاب والمدارس، وأصحاب المصلحة الرئيسيين الذين يشاركون في العملية التعليمية في الضفة الغربية. سأقوم أيضًا بمساندة الفصول التعليمية وإجراء عدد من المجموعات المركزية مع الطلاب والمدارس من خلال البحث، لن أرغب في حقوق الإنسان في المناهج الفلسطينية.

كيف يتم تقديمها، ما هي النصائح حول حقوق الإنسان في المناهج الأساسية، وكيفية تأثير التربية على حقوق الإنسان في الشارع الاجتماعي والسياسي داخل المجتمع الفلسطيني.

سوف يقوم باستخدام نتائج البحث لدعم وتطوير سياسة التعليم في فلسطين في المستقبل. ويمكن أيضا أن نستخدم النتائج لنشر أوراق علمية في المجالات الأكاديمية والتدريب في المؤتمرات.

فيما يتعلق بالبيانات، يتم جمعها من خلال المجموعات المركزية والمقابلات، وترخيص الاستماع سري، وثم مشاركتها مع إدارة المدرسة، أو وزارة التربية والتعليم أو أي جهة أخرى.

لا أمل أن نتفق عليه المشاركة في مقابلة عن 45 دقيقة، وكذلك المواقف عن استضافتي في سمك لإجراء المشاهدة الصحفية. إذا كنت توقعوا على المشاركة في المقابلة، ومشاهده الصحفية، يرجى التوقع على الاستمارة أدناه.

شكرًا
م. أبو مغلي

إذا كنت بحاجة إلى مزيد من المعلومات لا تترددوا في الاتصال بي عن طريق البريد الإلكتروني: mabumoghi@ioe.ac.uk

نموذج موافقة

سوف شاركت في هذه المقابلة، أو أسم الباحث، المشاركة في المقابلة، ليست لدي مشكلة في تسجيل هذه المقابلة.

الاسم: 

التوفيق: 
Appendix (9): MOE Approval Letter and Supervisor’s Letter to Ministry

1. MOE Approval Letter

[Image of the MOE Approval Letter]
2. Supervisor Supporting Letter

**Date:** 27 January 2014  
**Subject:** Support letter for Mai Abu Moghli  
Request to access PA Schools in the West Bank

To whom it may concern,

This is to certify that Mai Abu Moghli is a PhD Student at the Institute of education, University of London. As part of Mai’s research, she would like permission to visit three schools in the West Bank, which will be selected after consultations with the Ministry of Education. Mai will be visiting the schools during the period March–May 2014.

In the three selected schools, Mai will interview head-teachers and teachers, conduct focus groups with students and classroom observations. The data generated will be used for the purposes of Mai’s PhD research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information.

Sincerely,

Prof. Hugh Starkey  
Email: h.starkey@ioe.ac.uk
Appendix (10): Sample Data Analysis

(Coding)

Sample Coding

This is a part of a transcription of an interview with an academic from Birzeit University.

I asked him: What do you think about integrating human rights into the Palestinian curriculum?

The translation of his answer below

Translation

1 I don’t want to say we are not convinced.
2 There is a different point of view around our understanding of human rights
3 I think
4 But we cannot detach it from all the changes that happened in the Palestinian society
5 This is my opinion
6 The Palestinian society went through dramatic changes, really
7 We still don’t know when the intifada finished and when the talks about Oslo started
8 The 93 Oslo was an important junction for us, for me I say
9 In the Palestinian history and the Palestinian society in WBGS particularly
10 In my opinion
11 There are certain concepts related to human rights within the Palestinian society
12 Which do not necessarily align with the western concepts of human rights in general
13 I am not against the western concepts of human rights or....
14 On the contrary, I am with adopting human rights issues in Palestinian education system
15 Just to be clear
16 The problem is that, when it comes to the Palestinian society, so many things change
17 In this topic
18 Everything international, everything American is Western
19 Not Western, I don’t want to be harsh
20 But, anything American, there is a stand against it
21 In spite of this, this is the interesting thing, we take money from them and put it in the curriculum

Coding
Keeping the three research questions in mind, this conversation contributes to answering the second question:

- Considering the Palestinian context, what are the perceptions of teachers and students in the selected PA schools in the West Bank about human rights?

After numbering the lines within the conversation codes were created and color coded.

1 I don’t want to say we are not convinced.
2 There is a different point of view around our understanding of human rights
3 I think.
4 But we cannot detach it from all the changes that happened in the Palestinian society.
5 This is my opinion.
6 The Palestinian society went through dramatic changes, really.
7 We still don’t know when the intifada finished and when the talks about Oslo started.
8 The 93 Oslo was an important junction for us, for me I say.
9 In the Palestinian history and the Palestinian society in WBGS particularly.
10 In my opinion.
11 There are certain concepts related to human rights within the Palestinian society.
12 Which do not necessarily align with the western concepts of human rights in general.
13 I am not against the western concepts of human rights or….
14 On the contrary, I am with adopting human rights issues in Palestinian education system.
15 Just to be clear.
16 The problem is that, when it comes to the Palestinian society, so many things change.
17 In this topic.
18 Everything international, everything American is Western.
19 Not Western, I don’t want to be harsh.
20 But, anything American, there is a stand against it.
21 In spite of this, this is the interesting thing; we take money from them and put it in the curriculum.

Codes
Stressing Personal Opinion
Impact of the political situation
Impact of Social Context
General Understandings within the Palestinian Society
Contradictions

These five codes correspond to overarching themes

- **Sources of Influences**: Social Norms and Donors’ Agenda
- **Understandings and Perceptions of Human Rights**.
References


Darwish, S., Issa, A., Yusri, Z., Jaber, A., Al Labadi, F., Ammar, A., … Abu Al


Falk, R. (2014). *What is the Role of Academia in Political Change?: The case of BDS and Israeli violations of International Law.* Retrieved from


291


Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education. (2014). Summary of the
Third Strategic Plan for Education Development: Palestine 2020 an educated nation. Ramallah: Palestinian Authority


