

Palestinian Identity

An Article written by Nabila Espanioly

It is a well-established fact that Israeli educational system, policy and curricula in all levels, reflects the declared character of the state as a 'Jewish state'. As such, they silence the Palestinian Arab narrative while reshaping regional history for both Jewish and Arab students to fit the Zionist narrative.

Israel's 1953 Law of State Education specified the following aims for the education system:

“to base education on the values of Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the Jewish people, on practice in agricultural work and handicraft, on pioneer training and on striving for a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance, and love of mankind.”ⁱ

Years have passed since the enactment of this law, but the aims it specified remain central to current Israeli public educational policy. Though the law was amended in 2000, it maintains educational objectives for public schools that emphasize Jewish values, history and culture, while ignoring Palestinian values, history and cultureⁱⁱ

One of the main problems facing the Arab educational system in Israel is the overlooked history and identity of the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. They are not recognized as a national minority, instead, the system focuses on Jewish religion, history and Zionist ideology, disregarding the Palestinian Arabs' relationship to this Land. Furthermore, this situation ignores the Palestinian Arabs' collective right for identity education,

An important part of the human collective identity is the collective memory, which considers that the individual process of remembering cannot arise or take place except within a specific social framework. There is a link between the collective memory and the personal memories of the individual with the society to which he/she belongs. To remember and to explain. Students who do not know their identity and roots will suffer from an identity crisis, subdued oppression, and will not be open to the values of tolerance and democracy. Analyses of the professional ECCD library will demonstrate a lack of quality resources in Arabic to support adults living and working with children. This leaves the adults living and working with children, especially KG teachers and caregivers with few choices:

- Use translated resources that are not culturally appropriate.
- Utilize the same ideas again and again regardless of the developmental needs of children;
- Few try to be creative and develop their work with children according to the children's interest and developmental stages.

At Al-Tufula, since our establishment, we have committed ourselves to developing resources for Palestinian children and parents that resonate with our culture. Our hope is that, by using these resources, children can foster a healthy relationship with their own culture, thereby enhancing their Palestinian identity.

From our analyses, we have developed resources that focus on the initial circles of belonging and their contents. We aim to associate these resources with enjoyable experiences for the child. This not only boosts their knowledge, pride, and attachment to these contents but also equips them to critically engage with them. Through this, they can shape their future self-identity. Furthermore, these resources offer children a variety of new experiences that stimulate their curiosity and contribute to their overall development.

Over the years we developed the following Kits and resources for parents and KG teachers to strengthen the Palestinian identity:

- How delicious is my food
- Mokagah – diary and music
- Our Habits and Nutrition
- Me and My City
- Plants of my homeland (Palestine)
- From Alnakb to Bisan and music CD “Ya Tir Ganny”
- Developing and updating Palestinian lullabies and folklore stories for children
- Our villages remaining with us (children stories series)

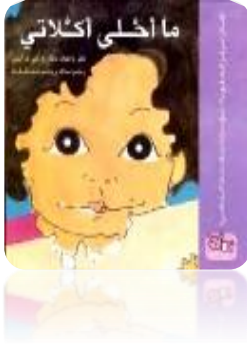
Example of our publications:



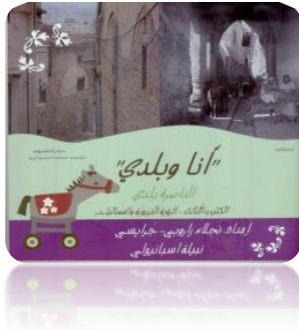
→ **Mokagah:** Diary for parents and children in the first year of a child's life. Here Hannan Karkaby Geraisey worked together with a popular poet and Al-Tufula staff to produce this diary that reflects the approach that is based on heritage knowledge and scientific knowledge. For example, many resources were written on the importance of attachment for the development of the emotional intelligence. In our heritage we found many idioms that state the same. The diary brings one message from both knowledge. Together with the diary a CD with the traditional songs presented in a new medium and music by Reem Bana.



→ Siham Badarne and Alia Safadi in their book "**Adatan waltegzia**" reviewed all habits and customs related to Palestinian food and analyzed them in accordance to professional knowledge. They explain some of these habits and the way they function, presenting the readers with the information needed to decide on their further use.



→ “How delicious my food“ Here Hannan Karkaby Geraisy presents a daily healthy menu for the child using a traditional. New words are introduced to accompany the drawings of Reem Kandaft that present different Palestinian foods.



→ The Kit “Me and My Town, a case study of Nazareth”. (series of 3 books)



"The Plants of My Homeland; between the Mountains and the Valleys", a kit that included the following:

- The pedagogical approach
- The plants in words and pictures
- The working approach in the KG (learning by project), documenting the KG teachers' projects
- 5 puzzles
- Memory game
- Domino game
- Other games to go with the kit.

This kit was written, designed and produced in cooperation with Musharaka (means partnership), a coalition that was formed by a number of lead non-governmental organizations in ECCD, which has long before been catering to the early child care and development needs of Arab Palestinian children in Israel and out of the deep acknowledgement of the immense and critical necessity for adequate ECCD for Palestinian Children in Israel.



- Collecting and documenting the heritage related to age from birth to 3 use different parts of the Palestinian community, is what Nabila Espanioly and Majeda Ellabuiny did in this book "Min Alnakab libisan". The CD has some songs with new wording that suits our values and some with new music.

Our village remains with us

Book series

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This project started during a family trip to one of our Palestinian ethnically cleansed villages “Al-Bassa البصة“, when the kids asked the name of the village, Nabila Espanioly (the author of this book series) felt responsible to tell the village Palestinian name . Five-year-old Jude asked, where it was because he had not seen traces of the village except for the beach.

So Nabila continued to tell the story:

“Once upon a place, not a long time ago, just before 48, there was a village called Al-Bassa”

Al-Bassa borders the sea, so the hero of the story was a fisherman. The children listened to the story with interest and enthusiasm, and here the Palestinian ethnically cleansed Villages Project was born.

This is the first time that stories are dedicated to children about ethnically cleansed villages and important figures in our cultural history, such as Mahmoud Darwish and Naji Al-Ali and Mai Zayaada the stories present the villages as a context for the engaging story for the child. The story is mostly fiction except for the character and the village is real. The stories were written in a way that children love and with their participation. The stories are fictional, but the names, locations, and topography mentioned in the story are real which made us write, “All the stories are fiction with imagination, except for Al-Bassa, Al-Barwa, and Al-Shajara Nazareth, which are

real. Al-Bassa is located on the sea, and that is why we wrote a story that we called “Sayyad Al-Bassa.” (Al-Bassa Fisherman) Al-Barwa is the village of our poet Mahmoud Darwish, and that is why we wrote the story we named it “The Poet of Al-Birwa”, and the Sajara (tree) is the village of Naji Al-Ali, so we called the story “The Painter of Al-Birwa.” The stories are written in the Palestinian spoken language, or “the national language.” To simplify the story, and make it more attractive and approachable to the children.

ⁱ Mar’i, S. (1985). The future of the Palestinian Arab education in Israel, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 14, pp. 52-73.

ⁱⁱ Adalah Report (2003) Education Rights – Palestinian Citizens of Israel. Shafa'amr: Adalah the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel.