

Abstract

General Background

“Racism is baseless hatred of the stranger just for being a stranger, on the basis of difference in race or national ethnicity”.¹ The law has defined as racism “persecution, humiliation, debasement, expression of hatred, hostility or violence, or causing a quarrel with a group or parts of the population, all because of color or race or national-ethnic origin”.² Racism can cause the abrogation of basic rights from certain people or groups just because of their color, race or ethnic or national origin. The fight against racism is based on the recognition that each person whosoever he or she may be has equal rights, and on nurturing the recognition of essential democratic values such as equality, tolerance, humanism and protection of minorities, which constitute the common basis of different groups in society.

The fight against racism, the striving for equality of all the State’s citizens, and the protection of human dignity for people whoever they may be has a central position in the values of the State of Israel. “Racism hurts human dignity and the equality between people. Racism undermines social order, social tolerance and public peace. It contradicts the essence and character of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.”³

Education has a pivotal role in shaping a democratic, free and tolerant society that enables each individual to live how he chooses while showing respect for those who are different and not part of his group. The Supreme Court delineated the centrality and importance of the right to education: “The unique importance of the right to education stems from the role of education as an essential value for realization of the rights of man as an individual, and in fulfilling his character, abilities and talents in the individual autonomous framework given to him...realization of the right to education is also intended to achieve social objectives. It constitutes a link between different sectors in society, and creates a bridge for social harmony

1 According to 2831/95 Alba vs. the State of Israel, 50(5) 221, 256-257.

2 Paragraph 144A of the Penal Code, 1997.

3 According to 2831/95 Alba vs. the State of Israel, 50(5) 221, 286-287.

without which the nation and society cannot exist; education is an important means for promoting free, democratic values and for the existence of normal social life.”⁴ And in another place, the Court said: “Without civics education and education for democratic values bestowed on all the State’s citizens, the stable existence of the democracy may be harmed and the move toward shaping in Israel a democratic, tolerant society that safeguards basic liberties may fail.”⁵ The State Education Law of 1952 established that one goal of state education is “to instill the principles laid out in the declaration of the State of Israel and the values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state and to develop an attitude of respect for human rights, basic liberties, democratic values...for the culture and perspective of one’s fellow man, and also inculcate an aspiration for peace and tolerance in relations between people and nations.”

As a result of the multiplicity of groups characterizing it, and the way it has developed since the establishment of the State of Israel, Israeli society is perceived as having deep social rifts that sharpen stereotyping attitudes and gaps, and even disagreement about the basic values of a democratic government and society. The division into different groups is also expressed in the state education system that includes three separate subgroups: Jewish–secular state education, Jewish–religious state education, and Arab–state education,⁶ alongside of which, there is also ultra-Orthodox-independent education that is not state-sponsored.⁷

4 Supreme Court of Israel, 7426/08 Tabeka Law and Justice for Ethiopian Immigrants vs. the Minister of Education, decision 14 of the judgment of Justice Procaccia (published in a computerized databank, 31.8.10).

5 Supreme Court of Israel 3752/10 Amnon Rubinstein vs. the Knesset, decision 8 of the judgment of Justice A. Hayut (published in a computerized databank, 17.9.14). Further on the right to education and its democratic content, see Yoram Rabin, The Right to Education 137-145 (2002).

6 State–religious education means state education but its institutions are religious by virtue of their style of living, curriculum, teachers and supervisors; State–Arab education means state education but in its institutions, Arabic is spoken and the curriculum is in Arabic.

7 The ultra-Orthodox institutions, in terms of affiliation with the State, are “recognized but unofficial” institutions, i.e., they are not owned by the State but are partially supervised by it. The State allocates a budget to them, which is lower than the budget State-recognized schools receive. Because of the partial supervision, these institutions have greater freedom in accepting students, hiring teachers and determining curriculum.

The Audit Actions

In the months of March through August 2015, the Office of the State Comptroller audited the activities of the Ministry of Education in regard to promoting the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism. Among others, the following issues were examined: Formulation of long-term system-wide programs for tolerance, prevention of racism and a shared society (hereafter – the “Education for a Shared Society and Prevention of Racism” project) and integration of the body dealing with this subject and mapping of the scope of the phenomenon among students; integration of the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism in knowledge courses,⁸ integration of the subject in activities of the Society and Youth Administration, training and professional development of teachers for teaching this subject, acquisition of tools for conducting protected discussions about subjects related to racism and a shared society, the holding of inter-sectorial meetings and integration of activities between different streams and sectors and regulating interaction with voluntary organizations. Likewise, the activities of three districts of the Ministry of Education—northern, Haifa and central districts—in promoting the subject were audited. The audit was carried out in the Ministry of Education—in the Pedagogical Secretariat, in the Society and Youth Administration, in the Educators Administration and in the northern, Haifa and central districts. Supplementary examinations were conducted in the State-Religious Education Administration (hereafter SRE) and in the Educational Psychology Service.

8 Such as civics, homeland studies and history and additional relevant knowledge areas.

Non-implementation of central components in the guiding perception and lack of measurement of the phenomenon of racism

Even though the Ministry of Education adopted, at the end of the 1990s, the report, “Being Citizens: Education for Civics for All Israeli Students”, published by the committee headed by Prof. Kremnitzer, which delineated a guiding perception for strengthening education for democracy and creation of common denominators in values and behaviors for the State’s citizens, it did not implement the report’s central components, which were meant to bring about a change in approach to democratic, civic and ethical education, and put it at the head of the education system’s list of priorities.

The Ministry did not formulate a tool for systematically and consistently examining, using uniform metrics, the phenomenon and by which it would be possible to know the scope of the phenomenon of racism in the education system and follow the activities being conducted in the schools for promoting the subject of a shared society and eradicating racism in the education system.

Non-implementation of the shared society programs

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Ministry of Education initiated system-wide processes for educating for tolerance and a shared society. However, these were not implemented at all or implemented to a minimal degree and without any direct affiliation with the fight against racism among students.

The Jewish–Arab split is the most complex and complicated among all the fractures in Israeli society. In January 2008, a public committee, appointed by the then Minister of Education, Prof. Yuli Tamir, submitted its recommendations for formulating State policies on the subject of education for a shared society between Jews and Arabs, including presenting the subject as a ministry-wide objective. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Education did not proote processes in the spirit of the committee’s recommendations, even though the decision to implement them was made in the Forum of the Director-General of the Ministry of Education in December 2009.

The multi-year educational process initiated by the then Minister of Education, Rabbi Shai Peron, in academic year 2013/2014, to create a model society based on universal, democratic, egalitarian, humanistic and Jewish values and with an emphasis on common denominators in Israeli society, and based on the perception that “the other is me”, was not translated by the Ministry into a work plan obligating all its units. In other words, budgets and dedicated human resources were not allocated and most of the tools and methods for its implementation were not developed and even work plans for special populations were not drafted. At the level of the field, the process missed its objectives: to cope with the central rifts in society⁹ and to bring the different groups closer together. Most (approx. 60%) of the programs for assimilating the perception that “the other is me”, which schools operated, did not relate to these social rifts.

Despite the approval given by the Director-General of the Ministry, Ms. Michal Cohen, in November 2014, for the principles of the program of education for a shared society and prevention of racism, up to the end of the audit in August 2015, on the eve of academic year 2015/2016, the steering team, set up for this task, had not formulated the central and essential components of the program that would enable it to be implemented. The Ministry of Education did not allocate a dedicated, properly-sized budget for this subject or teaching hours and dedicated instruction days and did not even concentrate all activities on the subject, with all its different aspects, in the hands of one field unit that would be responsible for and lead the different processes for promoting the subject in the education system.

9 The six rifts are relations between Jews and Arabs, relations between observant and secular Jews, relations between new immigrants and veteran Israelis, the distance between the center and the periphery, society's attitude toward people with disabilities and society's attitude toward people with different sexual orientations.

Non-integration of the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism in knowledge courses

In the framework of civics courses, which are characterized by directly relating to education for tolerance, a shared society and prevention of racism, taught in Grade 9 and in high school, the Ministry of Education did not integrate in the new civics curriculum, formulated in 2011, the recommendations of the committee headed by Prof. Kremnitzer, which were intended, among other things, to ensure the strengthening of education for democratic values. It also did not examine the nature of the assimilation of the new curriculum despite the inherent difficulties, among others, in dealing with controversial social and public issues in this framework. Further, the Ministry did not develop ways to broaden the circles of meetings between groups of students from different sectors.

The state education history curriculum, which is taught in Grades 6 – 12, includes objectives aligned with the values of tolerance and prevention of racism, The Ministry of Education, however, did not implement central components that were laid out in the Director-General's Circular for Teaching this subject, among which were integration of these values and identifying the dilemmas in teaching them. Moreover, the aforesaid curriculum did not touch on cultural characteristics and the heritages of different populations in Israeli society, which was in opposition to the principles of the core program for history studies, which laid out the components that must be taught in history in every stream of the education system,

The homeland, society and civics program taught in Grades 2 – 4 puts the emphasis on acquisition of common denominators of all students and provides expression of the values of tolerance and a shared society. The Ministry of Education, however, does not oversee its application and does not coordinate all the information about the scope of activities in practice and their quality. The Ministry also does not provide teachers that are teaching the subject with appropriate training despite the difficulties the

teachers have in teaching the program's content, including that related to the social rifts and political and social dilemmas.

Lack of training and professional development for teachers

Education for values and education for a shared society and prevention of racism are not included in the work plan of the Educators Training Division and its objectives. The Pedagogical Secretariat and the Educators Administration did not direct the division director to integrate the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism into the educators' training program, and preparatory actions for integrating it had not even been initiated, by the end of the audit.

Despite the need to improve the activities of the education colleges on the subject of "the other is me" and improve oversight of them, about two years after beginning this process within them, the Educators Training Division decided not to deal with the subject in academic year 2015/2016 and not to check if the subject had indeed been assimilated in the framework of the initiatives in which the Ministry of Education participates financially.

Continuing education for teachers on subjects related to civics education and prevention of racism is randomly given and there is no structured continuing education mechanism. The head office of the Civics Education Unit in the Pedagogical Secretariat, responsible for drafting the policies for civics education, including education for democracy and a shared society, also does not collect data about the scope of continuing education on this subject, and does not have an updated picture regarding the number of educators participating in them. In practice, the scope of continuing education courses on the subject of a shared society is extremely minor and is less than one percent of all the continuing education courses.

Asides from isolated courses for leaders of protected discussions, no civics teachers have yet been trained to use the unique program for having such a discussion—a program for multicultural discussion—and training of teachers teaching other subjects has yet to begin. Moreover, the Ministry of

Education has not yet conducted a study to evaluate the effectiveness of the tools being used by teachers when leading a protected discussion.

Limited action by the Society and Youth Administration

The Society and Youth Administration in the Ministry of Education, responsible for leading the area of informal education in junior and high schools, did not position the issue of education for a shared society and prevention of racism as an objective on its list of priorities and did not include handling of this issue in its work plan. Further, the subject was only integrated to a very limited degree, as a required subject, in the central programs for which the Administration's Community-Society Education Department is responsible.

Not fully exploiting activities with nongovernmental organizations

The Ministry of Education did not regulate its working relationships with nongovernmental organizations operating in the education system in the area of education for a shared society and prevention of racism, in line with the general policies that define how to work with such organizations. In practice, these organizations work randomly with different Ministry units, and the Ministry does not oversee any of their activities in order to ensure that they are working in a consistent, methodical and comprehensive way to fulfil the education system's defined objectives and needs.

Main recommendations

1. The Ministry of Education must place all the authority and resources for dealing with the issue of education for a shared society and prevention of racism in the hands of one body that will lead organizationally and fundamentally. It must establish a high-level steering committee for setting overall policy related to the issue and for making decisions and following their implementation. Furthermore, it must establish metrics

for methodical examination of the phenomenon of racism in the education system and quickly bring to an end the preparation of a long-term and mandatory system-wide action plan that will respond to the social rifts, in general, and will promote the subject of education for a shared society between Jews and Arabs, in particular, It must ensure the necessary dedicated budget and human resource allocation for implementation of the program, according to its objectives, and operate ways to track it after its implementation.

2. The Ministry of Education must anchor the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism in a required cluster of knowledge courses such as civics, homeland and history, and additional relevant knowledge areas. In this way, it will be ensured that all students in the education system will be exposed to the issue and its different aspects throughout their years in the system.
3. The Ministry of Education must act and turn the subject into an inseparable part of educators' training process. Based on the principles of the program for education for a shared society and prevention of racism, and on the recommendations of the different committees appointed to deal with the subject, the Educators Administration must formulate a uniform policy and integrate it into the training division, through cooperation with the team formulating the From Tolerance to Prevention of Racism program, and finally, integrate it into the five-year plan that it is building, which will be integrated into the five-year plan of the Council for Higher Education for academic years 2016 through 2021.
4. All entities involved in the matter, led by the head office of the Civics Education Unit and the Educators' Authority, must be mobilized to provide responses and implement guidelines set by the Ministry of Education, provided to teachers, in the framework of their professional development, and use the tools for coping with the phenomenon of racism in schools. It must formulate an action plan that details a timetable for accomplishing the different tasks set for dealing with the subject (such as building new models, mapping existing programs and

recruiting teachers from all sectors). Simultaneously, it must enlarge the scope of teacher training in the area of conducting protected discussions and test the effectiveness of the use of these tools in class.

5. The Ministry must increase the opportunities for inter-sectorial meetings and integrate teachers from different sectors in the framework of education of the “other” sector, and especially, increase the number of meetings between Arabs and Jews and the number of Arab teachers employed in the framework of Jewish education and vice-a-versa.
6. The Society and Youth Administration must promote long-term mandatory programs and processes for assimilating the values of tolerance, a shared society and prevention of racism in the framework of informal activities inside and outside of school. As a first step, it must guarantee that all its units, at different levels and in the different streams of the education system, formulate and assimilate education for a democratic lifestyle, according to the objectives set by the Administration’s head office in the framework of the strategic plan for academic year 2015/2016. In the framework of informal education, the Administration must also remove impediments harming the cooperation between students from the Arab sector and other sectors.
7. The Ministry of Education must regulate the numerous aspects relating to cooperation with the many nongovernmental organizations working in the education system regarding the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism. This process should be conducted in partnership with the organizations themselves and in accordance with a consistent, long-term policy.

Summary

“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin... People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.” This famous statement by Nelson Mandela, leader of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa,

embodies the optimism in the possibility of winning the battle against racism and the importance of education in its eradication and of education for a shared society. The education system, charged with educating the next generation, especially during the years when character and the world of the individual crystallize and take shape, fills a crucial role in the battle against racism and in assimilating the range of democratic values for advancement and creation of partnerships between the different groups and sectors in society.

Nevertheless, the report's findings sketch a picture of limited action by the headquarters of the Ministry of Education regarding the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism, despite the complexity of Israel's divided society, and notwithstanding the expressions of stereotypical and anti-democratic opinions and worrisome racist expressions repeatedly heard among youth. This picture appears even though the guiding principles of education for democratic values and the battle against racism in the education system were drawn up twenty years ago and endorsed in recent years by the Ministry of Education. This situation raises the suspicion that the Ministry's administration during this time, and also recently, even though it was aware of the importance of the subject and declared that it was one of the Ministry's objectives in recent years, and even though it charged the Civics Education Unit with preparing a systemic program on the subject, avoided taking action on the range of steps necessary for creating an appropriate organizational, budgetary, operative and pedagogical infrastructure for dealing systematically, effectively and over the long term with prevention of racism among students. Under these circumstances, the subject appears on the Ministry of Education's agenda randomly and at different points in time, and only following expressions of extreme racism and violence during peak days of the year.

The administration of the Ministry of Education must lead, without delaying, the education system using messages, and from preschool through to Grade 12, in dealing comprehensively, intensely, systematically, in a mandatory and structured way with the subject of education for a shared society and prevention of racism in order to bring about change in students' behavior patterns this area. To build the infrastructure necessary for this, it must convey an unequivocal message to all the streams in the education system and to everyone entering it—students and education staff from preschool through to Grade 12—that Israel is a democratic state belonging to all its citizens and resting on values shared by all the groups and individuals residing in it. The Ministry of Education must mobilize other government ministries and relevant bodies in local authorities, alongside regulating the activities of nongovernmental organization operating in the education system, in working on this issue.