This paper compares the formal and non-formal education systems currently operating in Israel, describing the special features of curriculum planning in non-formal education. The central argument is that the non-formal education system fulfills functions that constitute a critique of the formal education system. The non-formal system offers the opportunity for experimentation with pedagogical methods, knowledge structures, and instructional modes. At a later stage, however, the formal education system may adopt methods developed within the non-formal system. Data were obtained from document analysis, interviews, and observation. Israel has an extensive network of non-school-based education organizations that function as non-formal education organizations. They include such groups as youth movements; community centers; sport and culture associations; museum programs; day care centers; and various support, interest, and action groups. All organizations feature free membership and view education as a lifelong process. The themes typical of non-formal education organizations, which reflect basic conflicts in Israeli society, include: (1) universal versus particularistic elements of the Israeli national identity; (2) secular versus religious definition of the nation; (3) selective versus non-selective approaches to history and the Jewish past; and (4) the Jewish people versus the Israeli state. A conclusion is that the dichotomy between formal and non-formal education makes possible experimentation with methods, curricula, and structure, which serves a critical function. Despite their different ideological positions, conservative formal education and innovative non-formal education enjoy a complementary relationship. Formal education benefits from the experimentation produced by non-formal organizations and, in turn, consolidates the non-formal system. Contains 26 notes. (LMI)
Planning Non-Formal Education Curricula:  
The Case of Israel

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Introduction

Critical approaches in the field of education in general, and in educational program planning in particular, tend to focus on the connection between education, or the curriculum, and political and economic forces. Their main claim is that mainstream, established education boosts and perpetuates the dominant society and culture while preserving their stratified structure, transferring cultural capital, and turning the school into a place where skills that will be needed later in the working world are learned (Bourdieu, 1971; Bowles & Gintis, 1977; Cornbleth, 1989; Doyle, 1992). (1)

The critical view presented in this paper does not derive from the abovementioned critical theories; it stems from a functionalist approach that compares between two parallel systems. These are the formal and the non-formal education systems presently operating in Israel.

Our basic assumption is that the education system in any given society fulfills specific functions. Some of these are universal and can be found back everywhere, and others are particular to a specific society. When we talk about education as a system—as indeed we do in this paper—this is not only limited to the established, institutionalized definition of the bureaucratic educational organization, i.e., the Ministry of Education, but it embraces all organizations that deal with education and which can be identified by means of poly-system theory (Even Zohar, 1991). (2)

Thus this paper's central argument is that the non-formal education system in Israel fulfills functions that enable us to view it as constituting a critique of the formal education system. It is in this way that the non-formal education system offers the opportunity for experimentation, trial and error with pedagogical methods, knowledge structures, and instructional modes which as such form a comment and a critique on the received, formal education. At a later stage, however, methods developed under the first mentioned system may be adopted by the second through procedures of canonization.

The aim of this paper is to describe and define the special features of curriculum planning in non-formal education as it exists in Israel. This will be done on the basis of an examination of documents published by a number of non-formal education organizations, as well as by interviews with people working in this field and observations of their educational activities.

Non-formal Education Curricula

Israel boasts an extensive network of non-school-based education organizations which all function as non-formal education organizations. These organizations constitute an education system which neither refers to itself as a system nor functions according to a centralized bureaucratic pattern. This
includes autonomous organizations which we group under the name of 'system' due to the typical role they play in Israeli society, and because of the similarities in their ways of operating. Such organizations are: youth movements, community centers, organizations that deal with education for values, or "bypass systems" (Keller, 1987) (3), sport associations, the local authorities' departments for youth, culture and sports, the various youth sections of museums, day centers for adults and senior citizens, leisure time organizations, support, interest and action groups, etc. All these organizations share the view that the process of education is a lifelong one, including people's leisure time; moreover all of them can be joined free of charge. The educational programs that these organizations offer are all essentially unlike the study program in schools.

The notion of the curriculum has no exact and unambiguous definition. It changes according to the function of the person who defines it, and depending on the meanings that are the result of his or her definition of his or her work. Still, the basic, shared assumption in all these definitions is that the experience of dealing with knowledge -whether as a goal in itself or as a means for attaining other aims- is at the heart of the learning activities in the school (Schremer, 1993). (4)

We would like here to outline the uniqueness of the curricula in Israeli non-formal education through following their operation as participants in the communicational process. Every curriculum makes up a communicational process in so far as it is planned and produced by one party who intends to convey it to another. This communicational process involves a few essential components. According to Jakobson (1964) (5), structuring elements are part of any communicational act. These elements are: the addresser, the message, the addressee, the context, the contact, and the code. In every communicational process, an addresser passes a message to an addressee. In order for the communication to be operative in terms of creating understanding and significance, there should be a context, contact and code as well.

In accordance with the abovementioned three thematic axes, we can identify three theoretical directions in curriculum studies.

When we consider the issue of aims (6)(7) with regard to curricula in non-formal education, we find that they are grouped around three central axes which define the relations between all the elements that participate in a communicational process: that of the "individual", the "society" and of the "nation". These translate into a number of different "circles": I, I and my family, I and the community, I and the state. Behind these there are three guiding approaches, namely: the "academic approach", the "social" approach, and the "paedocentric" approach (8) all of which are interrelated.

As regards the first axis, which centers on the individual, most of the organizations refer to personal development (youth organizations) (9) (10), realizing one's personal potential, developing independent thought (Adam Institute (11), Zionist institutions (12), community centers (13)) experience with leadership functions (Scouts (14), local youth centers, youth organizations), developing personal aptitudes, such as: initiative, flexibility, social sensitivity, interpersonal communicative development, attitudes concerning sexual equality, sexuality, the family, etc. (youth organizations, community centers,
The second axis concerns society; subjects dealt with are, for instance, social processes and values, and the following type of aims are pursued: developing a positive attitude toward community members, interaction between groups, institutions, and organizations in the community (the local community centers, youth organizations).

The above preoccupation with values also includes issues concerning the relations between the individual and others, and between the individual and his/her country: personal and social involvement (Zionist institutions, youth organizations, etc.), a positive attitude to the environment, ecology, quality of life (Society for the Preservation of Nature, youth movements, etc.).

The third axis, to conclude, which centers on the nation, deals with dilemmas concerning national identity, Jewish identity, national security, peace, and democratic values (Zionist institutions, youth organizations, etc.).

The Variables That Participate in the Planning of Non-Formal Education's Curricula

1. Addresser and Addressee in Non-Formal Education Curricula

Usually, the addressers of non-formal curricula in Israel are staff of the guidance centers of organizations for non-formal education. The addressees are present in the curricula themselves in the form of preferred archetypes for the transmission of the curriculum in question, whilst in reality there is a clear tendency to adjust the programs to individuals or to specific groups (Keller, in print). (16)

The addressers of curricula in Israel act explicitly and openly on the basis of social, cultural, and political ideologies. These ideologies organize the mechanism that selects the context and code which in turn shape and are reflected in the curriculum. They serve as identificational markers of the organizations involved in non-formal education, and thus they enable contact with potential addressees. Due to this participation of ideologies in the curriculum planning, the latter's level of intentionality is high—something which can be found back in the curricula's goal-directedness. This intentionality and goal-directedness could have indicated that non-formal curricula are being used for indoctrination. This, however, is prevented by the presence of a number of other features which are no less typical of these curricula.

First, non-formal educational activities heavily emphasize the dynamic processes that take place in small groups in which tasks addressing values are carried out as part of the process of interiorization of these very values. This is strongly reminiscent—at least on the didactic level—of Dewey's (17) approach according to which any learning is always preceded by experience. Such experience creates great dependence on the group which functions as the addressee in the communicational process. Since there is unity, solidarity, and—to a significant extent—a tolerance of difference within the group, the usually unambiguous process of ideological communication is disturbed by the creation of an opening for plurisignificance, and thus for a plurality of interpretations.
Second, addressers and addressees of the curricula entertain highly symmetric relations. Symmetry in this case is defined as mutual contact based on a small difference in power between the participants in the processes that characterize non-formal education, and is built on principles and expectations that are mutually agreed between the parties, while neither of them is in the position to force its rules and wishes on the other (Cahane, 1994). (19)

Third, since the addressees join the non-formal education activities on a voluntary basis, the activities are organized around the addressees, their interests and needs. Non-formal education curricula, therefore, are multi-dimensional in the sense that they offer a wide choice of activities to meet their addressees' preferences. In the next section we shall extend the scope of this discussion to include both message and context.

Message and Context

It is difficult to consider the context and message of the non-formal education curricula in isolation from Israel's general social, cultural and political context. Contemporary Israel is a post-revolutionary society which is in the process of consolidating and refining the Zionist revolution. The significance of this revolution lies in the transformation of the Jewish society from a traditional into a modern one. This has been achieved by means of the Zionist idea, according to which education had a central role in the production of the symbols and rituals of the new society and culture (Elboim Dror, 1990; Lamm. 1985). (20)

The consolidation of the abovementioned revolution's accomplishments has involved processes of both conservation and innovation which together may be termed a "dynamic conservatism". Eisenstadt (1985) defines this type of conservatism as follows:

- it does not ally itself to or serve the narrow interests of existing groups; on the contrary, it displays, in its extreme dynamism, its readiness to drop the deep-rooted and narrow interests of existing groups, and to absorb into its institutions new groups with their particular problems. (21)

The significance of this "dynamic conservatism" in the realm of education can be gauged by the flourishing of a non-formal education system, with its own distinctive features. These are as follows:

(a) The non-formal education system is constructed as a non-centralistic system embracing a variety of organizations and institutions of different ideological affiliations, which aim at different consumer groups of all ages, with different and ever-changing characteristics.

(b) There is an absence of coordination among the different frameworks and in their activities. Moreover, it has more than once been found that people working in the field are unfamiliar with the "guiding approaches" or the "spirit of the conceptual approach" (Silberstein & Ben Peretz, 1983) (22) that underlie the various curricula. (22)

(c) Practical motivations precede their theorization in the knowledge field. This state of affairs forces the system into the dynamics of planning and organizing
the "knowledge" in -among other fields- the area of the curriculum.

The message, in the case of the organizations that deal with non-formal education, is organized around specific topics and is marked -as we said earlier- by its ideological nature. We will, therefore, examine a sample of ideological messages that are typical of non-formal education organizations, according to the subject of their activities and their stated goals. The variety of ideological messages will lead us to an examination of the context in which non-formal education takes place. The latter is organized around the basic conflicts that dominate Israeli society, as we will explain below.

A quick overview of the above themes and issues presented by the non-formal education organizations (see Table 1) shows that each one of them refers to basic conflicts in Israeli society, conflicts -as Cahane points out- which constitute part of the Israeli identity. These conflicts form the context of the messages transmitted by non-formal education organizations. Cahane indicates that there are several issues around which Israeli citizens tend to adopt ideological positions. These are, for example: secular-religious relations, Israel-Diaspora relations, and the tension between the political left and right. According to Cahane these attitudes can be placed on a number of continuums which stretch between the following organizing principles:

a. Universal versus particularistic elements that make up Israeli national identity.
b. Secular versus religious definition of the nation.
c. Selective versus non-selective approach toward history and the Jewish past.
d. The relations between nation and state: the Jewish people versus Israel.

It is difficult to measure in which way and to what degree non-formal educational activities influence the ideological positions of clients, both in the short run and in the long run. But even if we take the most radical point of view and judge these activities to have no impact at all on receiver values, ideas and behaviors, we should still have to admit that all that is conflictual in Israeli society and outside the consensus is dealt with in non-formal education organizations.

While the thematic level of the non-formal education organization reflects the ideologies guiding it, on the pedagogical level we can distinguish the educational-ideological system that organizes its didactics. And it is its didactics that configures contact and code within the educational curriculum.

Usually this is based on an eclectic model of instruction, which can be unpacked into a tridimensional compound of educational ideologies. In the first place, non-formal education declares almost uniformly that the client is the center of its educational activities. Even if in some cases this means a quite rigid notion of 'the client', the stress on the individual opens up these activities to the influence of individuation ideology in education. This ideology considers education as a process by which the individual attains self-development and self-realization. This process must be informed by the individual client's interests and needs. In the second place, a look at the content organization of the non-formal frameworks reveals fragments of various political, social and cultural
ideologies in accordance with the particular values espoused by the non-formal education in question. The educational ideology organizing the transmission of values is the ideology of accultur ation. In education this ideology usually centers on the transmission of the hallowed values of a culture. The process of education is considered a 'rite of passage' by which the client will reach her/his utmost development when 'the right', 'the good', 'the beautiful', 'the just', etc., as they are defined by this culture, will have become part of his/her personality. Each non-formal education organization has its own definition of the desired cultural system, and in this sense each of them reflects processes of mythification and demythification brought about by means of constant actualization of political, social, and cultural dilemmas in Israeli society.

As was said above, mythification is the process whereby a content, event or hero becomes part of an ideological system. This process takes place through the selection of relevant elements on the basis of the fundamental assumptions of the given ideological system. In the case of non-formal education organizations, this process involves treating current events which are given an ideological meaning that answers the human need to create order in a reality which would otherwise be experienced as chaotic.

The third major ideology that guides non-formal education organizations is the ideology of socialization. This ideology defines human nature as being composed of the social roles acquired through education. In this case, the role of the teacher or educator is to initiate clients in social roles linked, for instance, to gender or a profession. Knowledge here has the function of supporting the transformation of clients into social beings. School is the institution that concentrates on the ideology of socialization, but non-formal education organizations in the particular case of Israel, support schools in this task. This is so because the majority of non-formal education institutions and the education system are in agreement on certain points concerning social roles. For instance, no non-formal education organization denies the importance of the archetypal chalutz (pioneer) and lochem (warrior) as inspiring figures needed for Israel's survival.

The eclectic compound of major educational ideologies that guides non-formal education institutions is reflected in the founding texts of each of them, as well as in their curriculum and pedagogical activities. The pedagogical methodologies employed by these institutions vary in content to fit their specific ideological inclinations. Structurally they are very much alike: value clarification, games, trips, discussions inspired by the observation of works of art (texts, sculpture, pictures), group singing and dancing, etc. The intended effects of these pedagogical methodologies are as follows: to develop students' verbal and communicational skills, and to improve their ability to express and exchange ideas within a group; to develop problem-solving and decision-making abilities and a sense of responsibility. All this is achieved through value clarification. Another prominent element in the didactic approach of certain non-formal education organizations is games. Callois (1967) (23) has defined games as an activity which is free, uncertain, unproductive (from the point of view of inputs and outputs), and which operates according to fictive rules. He has characterized games according to their dominant elements, as can be seen in Table 2.

insert Table 2
Almost all these dominant elements, excluding catharsis, are present in the didactic activities of non-formal education institutions. By using these games non-formal education organizations open up given, real-life situations to imaginary, and consequently, alternative possibilities. Moreover, these games are supposed to offer tension release and to contribute a non-formal, free ambience which permits the discussion of different values and opinions. A special development of the Society for the Preservation of Nature is the fieldtrip. This is a pedagogic activity which includes the learning of geography, history, geology, botanics, zoology, etc., both from the local and the universal point of view, aiming at the development of a bond with Israel's landscape and natural phenomena. The idea is that Diaspora Jews become Israeli sabras through their historical, geographical and aesthetic attitude toward nature, their understanding of ecological problems, and their communicative and cooperative skills within the group. The model of the fieldtrip, as developed by the Society for the Preservation of Nature has been implemented by other organizations, including schools. Visits to museums and historical sites serve to render concrete historical myths such as that of the pioneers' heroic fight against diseases, or the territorial conflict with the Arabs during the period of the development of Jewish settlements at the beginning of this century. Visits are made, for instance, to the museum at Tel Hai which commemorates the heroism of Joseph Trumpeldor. At the same time, this offers an opportunity to illustrate the current, problematic political and security situation in Israel.

The above comparison among the leading ideologies of education that come together in the educational-ideological systems guiding non-formal education organizations, has shown that despite the eclectic nature of these systems, they cohere in the way they translate the major educational ideologies into didactic tools, creating in this way a specific mode of contact between addresser and addressee and a specific code.

Another typical feature of the code that prevails in the curricula of non-formal education in Israel is the attitude to the various knowledge areas. Whilst the schools operate according to a stratified definition of study subjects which are categorized according to the classical structure of the disciplines (Silberstein, 1991 (24)), this old framework is not maintained in the curricula of non-formal education. Thus, these curricula - and by extension, their educational activities - intermix these disciplines. Moreover, the subjects are studied in a casual way, unsupported by, for instance, the "academic approach" or the "cognitive skills development approach", and without the direct assessment of the students' knowledge of them. Thus, when we take a field trip as a typical non-formal education activity, we can distinguish various knowledge areas in it: biology, zoology, geography, groups skills, history, archaeology, sociology, psychology, etc. This attitude to knowledge areas offers a way of learning which reverses the links that usually obtain in formal education.

As a result of the structural constraints on the non-formal education organization, and of the voluntary participation of its clients, motivation, here, antecedes learning. In school, on the contrary, learning is supposed to create motivation. Since in the presently prevailing type of mass education participation is mandatory, neither the education systems nor their clientele are
subject to preferences or norms involving enjoyable learning. Their criterion, rather, is the a posteriori justification of learning as a vital and useful activity.

Lamm observes that one outcome of this situation is that the school’s guiding ideology stipulates that objective knowledge exists. This is the reason for the rigid division between study subjects as well as for the annual exams on the strength of which students advance to the next grade. At the roots of this view lies the assumption that objective knowledge must be acquired by learners and is necessary to them:

In any case, the role of the school is to foster pupils’ "serious" attitude toward knowledge and learning. Learning is work, and by this I mean work in its alienating sense. Never mind what you do, as long as you do it seriously. Learning, however, is not work, and when it becomes work it stops being learning. If we want to find an image [for learning] (though any image is ultimately misleading), then meaningful learning is more like play than like work: not because play does not require an effort, but rather: it is only in play that people are ready to invest an effort that flows from the activity itself... When learning is like play the individual learns not only the things s/he is engaged in doing, but also something else which is always more important: s/he learns to be involved and interested, to be responsible for her/his knowledge, and to discover her/himself through learning. (Lamm, 1973) (25)

Play, indeed, is one of the didactic tools used by non-formal educational organizations, but it must be added, generally, that the fact that participation is not mandatory, together with the "non-serious" aspect of this type of education, offers it the possibility to become a place where learning occurs a posteriori. Research has shown, for instance, that those who have been in Israel’s youth movements tend later in life to become leaders in the society’s elites. These studies also show that during their time in the youth movements these young people learned and had the opportunity to exercise skills involving leadership, organization, involvement, initiative, etc. (Adler, 1981). (26)

Another example is constituted by the many young Israelis who travel to the Far East or South America and who could be said to bring into practice a type of traveling they first learn and internalize in the educational activities of the Society for the Protection of Nature. Such major trips require a capacity for finding interesting places to visit, in terms of both their geographical situation and their social-cultural significance, and they also demand the readiness to take a certain risk in going for unknown places, to look for exciting and unique experiences. This type of foreign trip has come to constitute a kind of rite of passage, for Israeli youth, from adolescence to adulthood, and from military service to a regular civilian existence.

The above examples illustrate the kind of learning that takes place in non-formal education. It would seem that this learning is more related to the formation of behavioral patterns, cultural contents, and -occasionally- a lifestyle -all of which together make up the specific code of the type of education we are considering in this paper.
Conclusions

Our characterization of non-formal education as an activity in which subjects participate on a voluntary basis, and in which they engage during their leisure time, while the asymmetrical conditions that are typical of educators and educatees are -apparently- abandoned willingly, adds up to a picture according to which non-formal education is an activity that does not include learning in the usually accepted sense, whilst what is considered real learning occurs under the aegis of formal education. This dichotomy between formal and non-formal education is a result of certain notions, accepted in contemporary society, which are based in an ideological conception that determines the activities and the social institutions which contribute to learning. This dichotomy has its impact on the nature of the curricula of non-formal education as well as on those of formal education. This is reflected in the specific form of the variables that are part of the respective curricula. It is also reflected in the responses of educational entrepreneurs in the field of non-formal education, when they are asked to explain their reasons for working in this area. Mostly they come up with criticism -either overt or indirect- of the formal system. This can be found in the explicit discourse of the addressers of non-formal education curricula, and even more so when we submit this discourse to the above type of analysis. Even public opinion concerning the difference between formal and non-formal education shows this dichotomy. This public opinion is, as was said before, an outcome of ideological views regarding types of education and regarding learning. Such views indicate that there is a low "level of censorship" concerning whatever happens in non-formal education. This can even be felt in the fact that the one type of education is labeled as the negation of the other: non-formal education.

What this dichotomy makes possible is the existence of an educational scene in which methods, curricula, and even structural aspects of education can be experimented with -all of which, because of their difference, constantly comment on and criticize formal education. At a later stage, subsequently, the formal system, which is much more canonical in nature, takes over certain elements from its non-formal counterpart and adjusts them to the school. This mobilization does not occur intentionally, but simply because it is part of Israel's educational repertoire, and as a result of the transferral from one system to another by both direct and indirect ways. Thus it comes about that these two parallel systems -the one considered conservative, the other as innovative- feed into each other: preventing the petrification of the formal system, on the one hand, and consolidating the non-formal system, on the other.

The unique character of Israel's non-formal education was, initially, the result of the fact that Israeli society was an emergent society which evolved according to a revolutionary pattern. Later, with the appearance of dynamic conservatism, non-formal education came to serve as a scene for criticism of what had become conservative in Israel's education system: through its openness to experimentation, and by trial and error. Thus, the general education system in Israel gained an internal control mechanism which allows conservatism to go hand in hand with innovativeness.

Signs of these dynamics in the Israeli education system can be found in the
shape of innovations introduced by the formal education system. Thus, for instance, schools have recently developed interdisciplinary curricula -something which indicates a changing attitude to the knowledge areas. Examples are "fatherland and society studies" or "focus on learning" in elementary education, and "Eretz Israel studies" in the junior high schools. At the same time, special schools have been opened, such as the "Schools for Nature", "Schools for the Arts", language schools, community-based schools, etc. These new initiatives are supported by the State Education Law of 1953 which stipulates that 25% of the curriculum may be determined by the parents -an option that was left unused until recently. Such schools set their own curricula and these are ideologically, socially and pedagogically informed by much the same ideas as the educational programs in non-formal set ups. In parallel to these schools, the Ministry of Education encourages the opening of autonomous schools, who are required to formulate their own school "credo" which then is supposed to form the basis of the schools' particular curriculum.

The present paper situates non-formal education curricula in a critical position vis a vis formal education's curricula. This is a position that generates alternatives to the criticized object, i.e., the formal education system. We have done this by inference from the open-system approach which assumes that two different systems in a given society and culture, which derive from different ideological positions, will entertain mutual relations. We are of the opinion that these mutual relations will go on to inform the two systems while each preserves its unique nature due to the different functions each of them fulfils in Israeli society.
Notes


4. Oded Schremer, "Curricula - A conceptual discussion". Halacha KeMa'aseh, 8 (1993), 1-20 (Hebrew)


6. M.Glicksman, "Curricula as a theoretical and practical field - 1", Vol. 1 of a collection of international educational literature, 4 (1) (Jerusalem, Szold Institute, 1972) (Hebrew)

7. There has been a longstanding debate in educational research about the status, role, and situation of aims in curriculum planning; suffice it here to mention the discussion between Eisner and Hastings, Marxist criticism and the viewpoint of the sociologists of 'knowledge'( see also notes 8 and 9); D.Krathwohl, "Taxonomy of educational objectives", Handbook 2, Affective Domain. (New York, MacKay, 1964).


M.Ben Peretz, A.Zeidman, "Three generations of curriculum development in


17. J. Dewey, Democracy and Education. (An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education; translation; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1960). (Hebrew)


25. Zvi Lamm, Contradictory Logics in Teaching (Tel Aviv: Sifriat HaPoalim, 1973) (Hebrew)

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