

Review of the doctoral dissertation

under the title

*The National Identity of Arab Citizens in Israel: A Socio-Educational Study of the Palestinian
Minority in the “Hand in Hand” Bilingual Schools*

by Ms. Nehaya Awida Haj-Yehya,

prepared under the supervision of prof. dr hab. Stanisław Dylak,

commissioned by the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Education Sciences

at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

The dissertation presents, in theoretical and practical dimensions, the important issue of forming the national identity of Arab students in bilingual schools in Israel. It also shows the development of the alternative education trend compensating the deficits of public education in Arab society.

The problem and research undertaken in the dissertation are not only unique, but can constitute a certain model of education that can be used in the practice of intercultural education in other countries and, even more so, be copied and supported by the state in Israel. The research also fills the gap in the comparative research concerning the knowledge about the possibilities of solving the educational and identity problems of children from Arab families functioning in an alternative school together with students from Jewish families. This is an example of creating an alternative to public education, friendly educational environment for students from different nations, cultures, and traditions living in a common state.

The 438-page dissertation consists of a theoretical part, comprising six chapters, a methodological part, the results of the author's own research, and annexes. It should be emphasized that the doctoral student also took care to include summaries, thanks to which the explored threads are synthetically recalled in them. The dissertation is characterized by great care not only in terms of content, but also in terms of form.

The theoretical part is extremely extensive. It is an amazing compendium of knowledge about the fate of people living in Israel, historical and cultural topics, and especially the issues of educating children from Arab families in Israel.

In the theoretical part, the doctoral student first shows the issues of nationality and national identity in the post-colonial era. Then she analyses the state of Israel in the context of multiculturalism as well as the uniqueness of the Palestinian minority, which has its own needs as an indigenous minority. Further on, the PhD candidate discusses the situation of the Israeli education system in general and the Arab education system in Israel since the establishment of the State of Israel, through the educational policy under military rule to the present day. The dissertation also presents the practical implementation of their right as a "national minority" to cultivate their identity.

Of particular interest is the chapter on the role of education in the forming of the national, religious, and ethnic identity of Palestinian citizens in Israel, and the signs of an identity crisis among Arab students. It also contains academically and practically valuable information on the factors of the development of alternative education in Israel. The author concludes her considerations with the statement, which is reflected in the analyses and research, that the education system in Israel has not been perceived as a whole in which the Palestinian Arab factor is a fully-fledged element. Even though Israeli society is a pluralist society, Israel has deliberately failed to create a common basis for a true multicultural education, and has meanwhile missed an opportunity to make Jewish students familiar with Arab culture. Such a gap could be successfully filled by alternative bilingual schools largely supported by the state.

It should be emphasized that, throughout the dissertation, the PhD student uses numerous theories adequately to the undertaken issues. She freely uses them during the analysis of research issues and in order to interpret the obtained results. This proves her maturity, extremely extensive knowledge, being well familiar with the tackled issues, and her personal involvement in these problems, sometimes emotional and resulting from her own experiences.

The second part of the dissertation consists of methodological assumptions. The objective of the research work was to find out the opinion on the national identity and the socio-educational situation of the Palestinian minority in bilingual "Hand in Hand" schools in Israel. At the same time, the PhD candidate set many specific research goals, which, unfortunately, were not reflected in the formulated research issues.

The researcher asked one main question: How do the respondents perceive opinions on the national identity of the Palestinian minority in the context of the socio-educational situation in Hand in Hand schools?, and two detailed ones: How do the respondents perceive

the views on the national identity of the Palestinian minority from the perspective of Hand in Hand schools?, and How do the respondents perceive the socio-educational situation of the Palestinian minority from the perspective of "Hand in Hand" schools?

The qualitative method, appropriate to the issues raised, was used in the research. The research tools were semi-structured interviews. The research population consisted of twelve Arab teachers, twelve Arab graduates, twelve Arab parents, and three Arab bilingual school principals.

I have some reservations about duplicating research objectives in many places in the dissertation, which are not always consistent, are cited repeatedly, and developed in different parts of the work. The research issues also appear and become more concrete in the further part of the dissertation.

However, I noted with satisfaction that the author had coped well with the research matter so complex in terms of theoretical and methodological analysis. I can say, with full conviction, that she showed great maturity in constructing her own, reliable research workshop. By analysing the empirical part of and the conclusions from the work, it can be stated that the author managed to achieve the research goals. In the following parts, she consistently and in great detail presents answers to the research questions.

The research results are presented in four main chapters. The first three of them are presented according to the "categorization" of the participating populations. Each of them presents the main issues that arose during data collection as a result of the opinions of (1) school staff, including principals and teachers, (2) parents of the students/graduates of the bilingual school, and (3) graduates of the bilingual school. Then all study groups were discussed together, describing the criticisms, recommendations, and suggestions expressed and made by these groups for improving the situation in the bilingual school.

I have one important reservation about the empirical part. What is missing from it is a description of the functioning of the studied schools in terms of not only their uniqueness presented in terms of the community and their location, but also the educational concept and the curriculum. I obtained the information indirectly by reconstructing the answers of the respondents about the process of education and organization in these schools.

The obtained data were subjected to a multifaceted and thorough interpretation, not only in terms of educational studies, but also in the field of education policy. The formulated results and conclusions were used by the doctoral student to present valuable

recommendations in the final part of the dissertation. These are extremely well-thought-out original analyses, at the same time referring to the rich literature on the subject. The last part contains a selected bibliography and statistical data on various issues related to the education of the Arab minority in Israel.

To sum up: **I rate the dissertation highly** both in the context of the extremely extensive theoretical and methodological assumptions presented in it, and its empirical layer. The dissertation is an exhaustive presentation of the theoretical constructs and theories analysed and adopted in the research. It presents wide-ranging research issues as well as a successful analysis and interpretation of extensive research material. The dissertation has not only cognitive but also practical values. It should also be emphasized that the issues undertaken in the dissertation are extremely difficult and multi-layered. They require extraordinary knowledge and delicacy to examine and analyse such a complicated matter. I believe that the PhD student has a lot to do in this field. The effects of the PhD student's research work may be used for practical purposes and for further in-depth research.

Conclusion: Taking into account all aspects of the reviewed dissertation, I state that the dissertation by Ms. Nehaya Awida Haj-Yehya presented to me for review fully meets the requirements for doctoral dissertations.

I state that the dissertation fully meets the criteria for awarding a doctoral degree in social sciences in the discipline of education sciences. It fully meets the requirements for doctoral dissertations in accordance with the Act of March 14, 20003 on academic degrees and titles as well as the degrees and the title in the field of arts (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 1789, as amended) and, therefore, I hereby request that Ms. Nehaya Awida Haj-Yehya be admitted to the next stages of the doctoral program.

At the same time, I kindly request that the Scientific Council of the Discipline of Education Sciences at Adam Mickiewicz University award a distinction to Ms. Nehaya Awida Haj-Yehya, MA's dissertation.

Beata Frybnowska