# Coping with the Kafr Kassem Massacre in the Local Educational System: An Intergenerational Perspective

**Abstract:**

This study examines educators in the Kafr Kassem education system’s ways of commemorating and coping with the 1956 massacre that took place there, examining intergenerational relationships and the dynamic between the local and Israeli education systems. The study provides qualitative data analysis based on 28 in-depth interviews with past and present educators and demonstrates differences in attitudes and ways of coping. The first generation from the 1950s until the 1970s is shown to be distinctive in its passive fear and great concern about the issue. The second generation from the 1970s until the 1990s evinces an awakening to and awareness of what happened to those educators, prompting consciousness-raising education and keenness to act. The third generation working from the 1990s until today is defined by the institutionalization of the massacre story to the extent of educational activism aimed at deepening roots, a sense of heritage and national identity.

**Keywords:** Kafr Kassem massacre, intergenerational effects, memory and commemoration, education.

**Introduction:**

The study focuses on the multi-dimensional relationships between three generations of educators in Kafr Kassem in relation to the memory of the 1956 massacre that took place there. Intergenerational analysis that examines the ways these generations have coped with the massacre as a defining event in the life of Kafr Kassem is important for understanding it sociologically. It also identifies and characterizes the mechanisms for social continuity and changes in the educational system in Kafr Kassem (Herzog 2009; Burnett 2003). The study relies on the generational divisions identified in Mannheim (1956) and claims that the explicit or implicit definition of the generational unit is revealed in the way in which the different generations of educators struggled over their boundaries and their political identity in relation to the Ministry of Education and other state institutions. It also examines intergenerational relations within the educational system itself.

**Historical Background**

The Kafr Kassem massacre took place in the special circumstances pertaining just eight years after the 1948 Nakba. Hundreds of thousands of Palestinians remained within Israel’s borders after the war. Some of the Arab residents lived in mixed cities such as Haifa, Acre and Lod, or places such as Nazareth. Tens of thousands of Arabs lived in the most sensitive areas very close to the Jordan border, where military rule prevailed and inhabitants were under close military supervision. Villagers needed a license from the military authorities to leave the area. Many of them went out every morning to work in the surrounding fields and orchards. Military officials and border police regularly patrolled the villages and Israel Defense Force (IDF) scenarios in the event of war in the East saw these Arab villages as a major threat. The solution that it came up with was called in military parlance “S.59” and codenamed “Hafarfert” (“Mole”) (Sorek 2015). At the heart of the plan was the wholesale deportation of Palestinians from the so-called “triangle” in the event of war with Jordan and exercises were carried out in relation to the plan during war preparations (Rosenthal 2000).

On the eve of the war Israel waged against Egypt in conjunction with England and France on 29 October 1956, the IDF decided to bring forward the curfew on the villages in the Triangle area to 5pm, with instructions given to shoot anyone who violated the order. This meant shooting civilians who were working in the fields at the time the order was given, resulting in a massacre of 49 residents of the village of Kafr Kassem (Sorek 2015; Zertal 2018). The Kafr Kassem massacre was perceived by Palestinians in Israel as a continuation of the Nakba experience, yet another traumatic event in the series experienced since 1948 (Algazi 2009; Rosenthal 2000). From the late 1950s, however, a new phase in the Israeli establishment’s policy towards the Palestinian population would also emerge when Mapai party leaders and the military occupation commanders recognized that the presence of the Palestinians was a permanent fact and decided that new mechanisms of control should be established. These were not only military mechanisms and means of repression, dispossession, and surveillance, but also political and economic institutional mechanisms for integration. These included blocking economic development, strategic land expropriation, “integration out of subordination”, and re-education (Algazi 2009).

**The Arab Educational System in Israel**

This new policy had the greatest impact on the education system. The state of Israel did not recognize Arabs’ right to educate their children according to their cultural preferences and the Israeli educational system in Arabic does not enjoy autonomy, with the state controlling curricula and appointments (Egbaria & Jabareen 2014). The curriculum goals for Arabs are derived from the general goals of the state education system and intended to translate the Israel state’s aims and objectives into the Arab education system. The curricula are supposed to provide students with spiritual and social values, instill loyalty to the state of Israel, and match them with its social and cultural values ​​(Mar’i & Amara 2002: 103).As several Gramscian scholars have pointed out, public education is a crucial tool for establishing hegemony, a domination achieved by making the existing social order seem like common sense (Williams 2005). In that vein, Arab public education in Israel aimed at making the state of Israel, as well as the separation of the Palestinians in Israel from other Palestinians, an unquestionable reality ( Sorek 2015).

Israeli Jews recognize the historical fact that the Arabs are a minority born in Israel but do not recognize their right to receive the privileges of an indigenous minority (Reiter 2005: 26-27; Smooha 2001: 262-263). It seems that one of the reasons for keeping Arab education in Israel bound to the Ministry of Education is the desire to control educational content completely. This indicates a negative attitude on the part of the establishment towards the Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are perceived as a “threat” and not as citizens who should benefit from collective rights such as the right to educational autonomy (Jabareen 2006). Arab education is a crucial mechanism of control over Israeli-Palestinian conflict through, among other things, the emptying of the curriculum and the systematic cooption of Arab academics to become non-political technocrats. This control means denying the unique cultural and national needs of Palestinians and destroying the natural and free development of their national-cultural identity. Moreover, the General Security Service (GSS) has intervened practically since the very beginning of the state, with appointments of principals and teachers in the Arab education system, an intervention that seriously violates the right to equality, education, and dignity (Golan-Agnon 2004; Cohen 2006). The state’s rigid supervision of Arab society through the education system has led to the exclusion of politics and issues of identity within it and has created fear and caution among educators ( I’Mar & Amara 2006).

The distance between the reality of the Arab education system and the social and political reality of Palestinians in Israel has caused many tensions within the system. This study examines one such instance: how the local education system in Kafr Kassem has dealt with this inbuilt tension in the years following the 1956 massacre. It examines what mechanisms are created within the local educational system to cope with the collective trauma experienced by the local residents and whether there are divergences between generations in dealing with such a traumatic event. The research moves beyond the crime itself to examine how the massacre’s impact on the three succeeding generations of educators within the system.

**Generational Differences**

Today’s society almost naturally accepts the concept of “generation” as a diagnostic category for comparison between groups based not only on belonging to a particular chronological period but also to a social stratum with common characteristics of identity and consciousness (Herskovez 2014). This study adopts Mannheim’s definition of the term in an attempt to understand how sociopolitical processes were reflected in the educator generations that followed the massacre. Sociological theories that give “generation” a meaning beyond the totality of people living in one era and beyond family relationships is a relatively new form of conceptualization, examining the issue from the perspective of structural divisions, one of which is the generational divide, as part of sociological investigation of issues. Almog and Almog (4104) connect the concept of generation to culture, society, and history. At the same time, it sees the concept as both a product and a creator of a period of cultural uniqueness.

Karl Mannheim, a seminal theorist on the concept of generation, posited three elements in order to define it: shared geographical place, shared historical place, and shared sociocultural location. He distinguished between “generational units” and “generational connections” (Gilleard & Higgs 2002) and investigated the development of generational values, contending that a “generation” was not simply a cohort bounded by year of birth, but a group of contemporaries who share a history and a set of experiences that have marked their formative life. However, this latter aspect does not necessarily lead to a generation’s self-recognition: for that to occur, Mannheim suggests that there needs to be an active recognition of the nature of these experiences. Being born in the right place and experiencing certain events do not necessarily equate to a generational consciousness (Herzog 2009). Generational analysis emphasizes the existential experience and social conditions in which generations form and which together constitute a locus for such research. Strauss and Howe (1992) takes the work of Mannheim further by not only looking at how events can shape a generation, but also investigating the concept that these generations might themselves mold history. Strauss and Howe describe “crisis” and “awakening” events in history that affect the generations who experience them. Those generations will then go on to shape the next cycle of crises and awakenings. There are various means by which historical events in one generation can influence subsequent generations. This is a perspective that seems to have resonated in the literature related to native people living with consequences of the historical events experienced by their ancestors (Evans-Campbell 2008; Gone 2009; Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen 2004). It is important to identify generational reactions to specific historically events or periods. There has been less attention paid to the effects of historical events and experiences on the educational system and whole communities (Evans-Campbell 2008; Waldram 2004). Furthermore – and this is particularly germane to native groups who have endured continuous assault from colonizers – research examining individual-level intergenerational effects has typically not considered the larger context in which these historical events are situated (Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait 2000).

**Research Methodology**

The study deploys qualitative data analysis to examine in depth the memory of the massacre among educators, utilizing detailed interviews to explore these educators’ experiences. The interviews allowed for an understanding of and construction of the meaning of these experiences as described by the interviewees. The aim was to encourage the interviewees to disclose their stories at length and to talk about what the massacre meant to them. This process facilitated the interviewees’ construction of an integrated “self” as they achieved a clearer understanding of what they had experienced, what they felt about it, and what it meant to them. It did so while also recreating and reconstructing the experience being analyzed (Seidman 1991). This approach is concerned with understanding the meaning people attribute to behaviors and social phenomena and their interpretation of texts and actions (Marsh & Furlong 2002). The study identifies both differences and similarities between the generations of educators and their coping mechanisms in relation to the massacre. The author interviewed 28 educators (20 schoolteachers, five principals and three education directors) in Kafr Kassem: 15 females and13 males. All were born and raised in Kafr Kassem except two who worked in Kafr Kassem during the 70s but were not residents. Eight educators were from the first generation identified, 10 from the second, and 11 from the third generation. The men ranged from 28 to 75 years old and the women 25 to 62. In this study, I deployed Mannheim’s theory on generational divisions.

**Research Findings**

1. **The first generation**

The study found that the first generation of educators who worked in the local school system at the time of the massacre and/or during the subsequent 20 years consciously avoided dealing with the story of the massacre in any way possible. Most of the educators employed in the local system were not locals and some were Jewish. Some of the first-generation cohort were local teachers and educators. Most of them expressed a dislike for and fear of raising the issue of the massacre within the education system. The deterrent and supervisory mechanisms that the Israeli Ministry of Education applied to the Arab education system led managers and educators to high levels of aversion of such issues and self-censorship over the content within their educational frameworks, transforming the educational arena locally into a sterile zone. This sense of fear can be understood from the words of one of the interviewees who described it in this way:

I remember that I was a young teacher in the education system. My father constantly warned me not to interfere with politics. In addition, it was clear that whoever was involved in politics would be interrogated and imprisoned. Even though I had two pupils in my class who lost at least one of their family members in the massacre, I never spoke with them about their loss. I was afraid, everyone was afraid … in those days we were all in a war for survival.

The crisis of trust that began with the Nakba, during which personal, family, community, economic and cultural relationships were traumatized, grew stronger with the massacre. The virgins in power were on the offensive and cooperation between the military powers and the political establishment reduced the ability of Palestinian citizens to fight for their rights. The first-generation of the 1948 war who remained in Israel held no power in or over the government (Rabinowitz & Abu Bakr 2003). The sense of insecurity that prevailed in those days, engendered great fear and suspicion. One of the interviewees expressed these feelings in this way:

Everyone was afraid to talk, even more so if you were a government official ... We were afraid to speak out ... We knew that we are surrounded by informers whose job it was to denounce anyone who expressed dissatisfaction with the political situation

The state continued the policy of the British emergency laws of 1945 operating against its Arab citizens, as well as the law prohibiting teachers from identifying with or operating within a political organization. It was sufficient for a teacher to attend a political meeting or to help distribute a party newspaper to find himself outside the education system (Rabinowitz & Abu Bakr 2003). These are the remarks one of the interviewees in this regard:

In those days, there was a difficult military regime. No one dared open his mouth. The military regime officials knew everything ... Every year, a week before the Kafr Kassem Memorial Day, I would get a phone call or a visit from the inspector. In the same conversation, he always reminded me that I should not close the doors of the school, or let my staff deal with this issue ... Once a member of the GSS came to interrogate me about one of the local teachers. I am religious person and did not want to harm anyone. Then he became very, very angry and said to me: “You know that your salary is from the Ministry of Education? What benefit do we have in a person like you?

Another teacher recalled her experience as a pupil in those days:

One day, I drew a painting that was entirely devoted to the issue of the massacre, and the teacher saw the painting, and quickly tore it up. “Never paint such paintings anymore”, he said angrily, “Do you want to implicate me ?!”

Thus we can summarize this section by saying that the first generation of educators – those who experienced the Nakba and its consequences as well as the Kafr Kassem massacre –

dealt with their new fragile reality mainly using tools for survival, and experiencing feelings of alienation and suspicion. The feelings that characterize the responses of the first generation of educators to their reality were fear, as well as a lack of confidence in the system and the people who controlled it.

1. **The second generation**

The results of the study indicate that, unlike the first-generation educators, the second generation of the 1970s-1990s, who were mainly local and village teachers, experienced the new wave of national and local awareness regarding the massacre. This consciousness was the result of education and activism by the Communist Party and certain villagers and the land movement members who raised awareness among the locals and linked the historical Palestinian narrative to the story of the massacre and the sociopolitical reality of those days. This generation had an in-depth understanding of what took place during the massacre and became aware of their constitutional status as Palestinian citizens of the State of Israel with equal rights. It is important to note that this wave of awareness gained momentum after the abolition of the military regime ruling over Palestinian citizens of Israel in 1966 and in the aftermath of the 1967 war. From the early 1970s until the 1990s, the educational, organizational, public and political infrastructure of the Palestinian community in Israel became established and a diverse civil society gradually developed.

In the 1970s, a new political organization was formed within Arab society which incorporated political activists, academics, merchants, high school students, Arab student committees at universities, professional associations, and political coalitions. The Land Day events were further evidence of the political maturity of the Arab population in Israel The 1970s also witnessed a change in the local government system. The Zionist parties lost interest in and control of the Arab communities (Rabinowitz & Abu Bakr 2003; Jabaree 2008; Abu Saad 2006). The result was the strengthening of the Communist Party’s control over Arab communities. Another dimension in raising awareness among this generation was the legitimization of publicly engaging with the massacre story. This following pressure from the Arab Knesset to put the massacre on the table for discussion, despite the many attempts by the Ben-Gurion government to prevent that happening. The story of the massacre was placed on the Knesset table and the public pressure that followed led to the prosecution of the officers involved in the massacre. This, by contrast to other political events, endowed the Arab public in general and the residents of Kafr Kassem in particular engagement with the massacre story with legitimacy, including within the education system. The nature of this legitimization has varied over time, and with changes in education policy over the years, between official openness and its opposite.

One teacher describes these developments as follows:

There is no doubt that those who raised the political consciousness within me were members of the Communist Party. They were knowledgeable and not afraid of expressing their opinion. Thanks to them, it became possible to deal with the massacre in the classroom.

Another educator said:

Among the members of my generation were some colleagues who dared to raise their voices, bring up the story of the massacre, deal with it within the education system and who were also willing to pay the price for it. One of the most prominent was Sheikh Abdallah Nimr Darwish[[1]](#footnote-1), who later became the founder of the Southern Islamic Movement in Israel and the head of the first council belonging to the Islamic Movement in Kafr Kassem. He had a great influence in the ’80s and the ’90s on the local educational system in Kafr Kassem.

Another teacher described the situation in this way:

The ones who told us mainly about the details of the massacre were the teachers from Kafr Kassem, the most prominent of whom was Sheikh Abdallah Nimr Darwish, blessed be his memory. He was a devoted teacher in the 1970s. He returned from his studies to the territories and spoke bravely about the massacre. By the way, he did not survive long in the system; they removed him from the education system.

The changes in the educational system in Kafr Kassem led to a large proportion of educators and principals becoming local residents, unlike as in previous years when non-locals staffed the local education system in Kafr Kassem so that the issue of the massacre did not affect them or their family personally. The fact that some of the local teachers themselves were second-generation victims of the massacre led to more commitment and daring in representing the massacre in the education system. Another teacher describes herself as a student in those years:

The teacher who was a resident of Kafr Kassem and lost a relative in the massacre ... had a great influence on the level of knowledge and consciousness he instilled in us. I still remember that he asked us to write a letter in the creative writing lesson to one of the victims of the massacre … This had a decisive effect on my understanding of what had happened and suddenly I found myself asking, inquiring, interested. He built up my consciousness on the story of the massacre.

To summarize, the end of the military regime and the increase in Arab citizens’ awareness of their political identity and civil rights led to a growth in consciousness in the local school system and, among other things, the story of the massacre gradually emerged in in a way that it had not among the first generation.

**The third generation**

This growing level of awareness of and preoccupation with the story of the massacre and its relation to the broader Palestinian story that the consciousness generation instilled within the education system led to the creation of a third generation from the 1990s to today, a proud generation with a high level of education. Most of the educators of this generation are academics with a high level of knowledge, awareness, and pride in themselves. The current generation, almost all of whom are local residents, include descendants of massacre victims. This generation has identified how the trauma of the massacre has affected the villagers in different ways. It is a generation that feels the need to deal with the story of the massacre as part of the process of constructing a narrative and collective identity.

One of the members of this generation told me:

Since I serve as director of the education department in the community, I send a letter every year with clear instructions about the importance of dealing with the issue of memory and commemoration in schools. Moreover, as I have always believed in doing, I give absolute support to every teacher, giving an order to lock the doors of the schools on the same day of the traumatic event to help others remember and pass it on to future generations.

We are no longer afraid. I am a person who adheres to his values, and my values ​​guide me to deal with the story of the massacre. I do not want a story of the victims to disappear.

The findings of the study show that some of the educators of this generation, most of whom are principals, teachers and educators resident in Kafr Kassem and directly connected to the massacre, narrated that the curricular contents and outlines set by the Ministry of Education, including the Ministry’s common annual theme directed to the education system in general, are being consciously employed by these educators to further pupils’ knowledge and awareness of the massacre.

The interviews show that educational content has been used as a tool to deepen the knowledge about the massacre, enabling students to gather knowledge and draw conclusions about it, thus promoting a deeper understanding of the sociopolitical reality and developing a national identity and sense of belonging to the place.

One of the educational directors stated the following:

Every year we have a new plan which deals with a common theme and elicits values ​​and attitudes from educational staff members, dealing with significant learning issues and developing learning functions in the 21st century. None of the supervisors or the Ministry of Education officials tell me how to implement the outline within the school. I usually try to integrate the issue of consciousness, including the story of the massacre and its ramifications for us as a society through the general outline ... Each time I choose another way to integrate the story through the outline.

Another issue that has been prominent among the third generation of educators is the rise in the level of political and civic awareness. This awareness has given rise to a deep understanding that the education system is a central arena for raising political consciousness as well as strengthening the sense of heritage and social and religious identity. The theoretical conception proposed in this study, based on Mannheim’s approach, is related not only to differences in age and life experiences, but also to political events and violent conflict in order to delineate units of time for sociological and generational analysis.

The rise in the political and social consciousness within the villages has permeated the education system. The activism of the Communist Party during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s (Abu-Becker and Rabinowitz 2002; Sorek 2015) and its role in exposing details of the massacre, coupled with the rise of the Islamic movement and the persecution of its members have led to an increase in the level of consciousness among the village residents. Moreover, there are those who have seen a strong connection between the injustice done to the local residents in the massacre and the persecution of members of the Islamic movement in the 1980s and 1990s.

The rise of the Islamic movement to power in Kafr Kassem in 1989 was a significant step in removing the barrier of fear which has always impeded the commemoration of the victims of the massacre. The municipality has also backed the local education system officials and empowered them against the Israeli Ministry of Education.

The education system has proved to be an optimal arena for the collective need to process this traumatic event, the rise in collective awareness, and the need to construct a collective narrative for what happened, both at the level of mechanisms and content. One director described this as follows:

Distinguished and educated members of the Islamic movement and, before them, Hadash and the Communist Party, have actively fostered awareness for us in and out of school, especially in the clubs. At one stage they even entered the school classrooms to tell what had happened in the massacre, the chain of events, and the connection between our reality and the past.

An educational manager states:

Awareness did not happen thanks to the education system. Rather it began in homes and through individuals who dared to reveal the truth. This is the type of education that has helped raise people’s awareness of what actually happened. It mainly came from ordinary people who dared to tell the truth and not from schools. These days, however, the school has become the focus of educational activities in this field.

The interviews show that the contents of the education system are being used as a tool to deepen knowledge about the massacre, draw conclusions, gather knowledge about the massacre by the students, promote a deep understanding of the socio-political reality and develop a national identity and a sense of belonging to the place.

Study of the third generation also shows that the local education system has succeeded in connecting the events of the massacre to the national identity, cultural heritage, and value-based education. There has been a strong and sustained growth in the prominence of this issue. In almost every interview conducted for this study, a connection was made between national identity and Palestinian society in Israel, indicating that without Arab-Palestinian identity and Muslim identity and heritage, Palestinian society would not have survived.

National consciousness has been a significant component in the discourse. In addition to the issue of education in values, there has been a great deal of connections made between these two issues, that is, between preserving national-religious identity and educating in values. Most of the interviewees saw education in values ​​and the preservation of heritage and identity as central to the preservation of the Palestinian society in Israel.

When the interviewees were asked what values ​​they meant, the answer was the same for almost everyone. Most of them referred to education in human values, respect, acceptance and inclusion of the other, tolerance, and respect for the environment. There were those who linked these values ​​to those ​​of Islam ​​mentioned in the Koran, in hadith, and in Arab heritage. Some stated that sustaining values ​​was central to self-preservation, in light of the many incidents of violence and the culture of crime that has spread through the town, a phenomenon that has had a severely negative impact on the community. There were also those who talked about education in values ​​not only towards their own group, but also towards Israeli Jewish society, and stated that moral education would always be a significant challenge to a country that defines itself as a democratic and egalitarian state. One interviewee stated:

My identity is part of my existence ... We Palestinians are proud of our identity, but we are citizens of the State of Israel, and we respect our citizenship. It is important for me to convey my pain to the other side. I claim that not all Jewish society is to blame for the massacre and that it is necessary to learn to live together. I do not recant my memory, just as I educate my children in the values ​​of honor, respect, pride and peace.

Another stated:

It is important not to distance ourselves from the values ​​of our religion. We are in a very problematic situation! Our struggle today as a Palestinian society in Israel is not with the state. Rather, it is an internal struggle against violence and ignorance, which prevail in the Palestinian society in Israel.

There were those who made a significant connection between the values of land and national identity. One teacher said:

The massacre took place during the olive harvest season. The olive tree is the symbol of Palestinian society and the Palestinian people holding onto their lands. It is not for no reason that the entire community prepares *msakhan*[[2]](#footnote-4) on the memorial day for the victims of the massacre in Kafr Kassem. It is an act to help preserve our lands and our heritage, ourselves and our identity.

Another teacher said:

It is important for us to pass on to future generations the value of the land and to connect this value to our identity. The murder of Muhammad is a proof that we are in an existential struggle here. I do not want to educate my students into violence. It is more important for me to raise an educated generation with knowledge and a strong sense of belonging.

**Findings and Conclusions**

The starting point of this study is that human knowledge is anchored in social and existential conditions which have defined the experience of the generations of educators in Kafr Kassem. Understanding how these generations have viewed social issues and uncovering what their social values have been is important to understand how these they have acted over time on the issue of the massacre. The study proposed to identify the knowledge and the coping mechanisms of the educators by analyzing chronologically continuous generational units, relying on the conception that society is a complex fabric of diverse groups struggling to define the social order (Herzog, 2013).

This approach has enabled us to view the co-existence of past, present and future simultaneously in a given society and the power relations that shape this. Examining generational units simultaneously has enabled us to expand the definition of the collective and its boundaries within the educational system, and it allows us to more deeply understand how these different generations of perceive the role of the local education system in relation to the Kafr Kassem massacre.

It is impossible to separate discussing the results of this research from the existing political conflict between Israeli society and the Palestinian minority, as well as the way it has become embedded into the education system over generations. The conflict has served as a basis for the policy adopted by the Ministry of Education towards Arab-Palestinian society in Israel. The encounter between generations of educators and the Israeli educational authorities from the establishment of the state of Israel until today has been complex, fraught and multidirectional at any one time. It has also helped shape profound intergenerational and intra-group processes. We now come to discussing the study findings in detail.

The findings point to close connections between each particular generation, their sociopolitical reality, and historical events that have shaped their existence. The findings of the study indicate intergenerational differences and transitions in consciousness with regard to the narrative around the Kafr Kassem massacre within the local education system. These differences are not only chronological in character, but also value system-based, and shaped by the historical, political and social forces that these generations experienced and grew within. Each cohort shared similar core ideas and values reflected in their behavior as educators throughout their lifetime, something which Mannheim refers to as a cohort that share a value system (Gilleard & Higgs 2002). These shared experiences and values have shaped the nature of the response and the ways of coping the cohort adopted. This has ranged from ignoring to fully engaging with the story of the massacre within the education system.

The research findings show that, as the event itself becomes more distant with time, the ability of educators to process and discuss it educationally has become more evident. This can be attributed to the sociopolitical changes that have occurred in the education system, and thus a correlation can be seen between the level of consciousness and openness to dealing with the issue. Of the changes that took place in the education system during those years, it is important to remember that they were due to the political circumstances that put the story of the massacre on the public’s agenda. That story had variable prominence in Israeli public discourse, swinging from 2000 to 2006 between recognition and rejection of it as part of the curriculum. Two bills on the issue came up for debate in the Knesset but were rejected (Naveh 2017). Despite this controversy, and unlike other traumatic events in the history of the Palestinian minority in Israel, dealing with the Kafr Kassem massacre has been legitimized in recent years, both because of the material that Israeli scholars have been able to reveal about what happened (see, for example, Rozental 2000; Sorek 2015; Zartal 2018) and the visit of President Ruby Rivlin to Kafr Kassem in October 2014 to the ceremony marking its 58th anniversary.

The findings of the study show that the educational system in Kafr Kassem underwent considerable change and was influenced by many factors. In examining the interior processes of generations, we can see that the generational response was influenced mainly by the sociopolitical reality and the level of supervision that the official education system operated. Thus, for example, it can be seen that periods in which the Ministry of Education pursued strict supervision presented a threat to members of that generation, who were forced to distance themselves from political narratives. In periods when supervision was less intense, profound processes took place among members of the same generation which aided an increase in the level of awareness and narrative on the massacre within the local education system.

The years immediately after the massacre, when the Palestinian population in Israel was under military rule, the main objective was to ensure full control over the areas inhabited by Arabs and to supervise the movements and actions of the residents (Sorek 2015; Rali 2000). The Arab education system did not escape such supervision. All activities of the Ministry of Education regarding Arab education – as Zalman Shazar, who served as Minister of Education at the time, wrote – were governed through a joint committee with the military administration and in coordination with the Ministry of Defense and the Prime Minister’s Office. These bodies were instructed to impose strict supervision on Arab teachers and principals and on the content taught at their schools, because, according to Shazar, it was necessary to keep an eye on the Arab teachers to prevent them bringing evil spirits in through the walls of Arab schools (Shazar 2008: 354). Indeed, few evil spirits managed to do so in those years due to the tight Ministry of Education supervision. The removal of the military regime and the harsh levels of supervision imposed over the local population, along with the sociopolitical changes of the 1970s, brought about an increase in the level of awareness that grew outside the school walls, in the streets, in houses and in political clubs, most of which were run in secret.

Official policy affecting Arab schools, however, still falls under the surveillance of the Ministry of Education, which continues to coordinate with the Shabak (Rali 2000).[[3]](#footnote-6) Even in the second generation, you can see the parallel between their work and their attitude to the story of the massacre within the education system, and the change in the policy of the Ministry of Education. Analysis of the research findings allows us to learn not only about the “regime” forces that have operated over the generations, as presented in this article. It also demonstrates the different ways of shaping the conscious resistance compared to the consciousness suppressed by generations of these educators. It also provides evidence about these forces and the opposition to them, expressed both in the perception of the socio-educational and purely educational space. The professional identity of the three generations identified in this study varies along a spectrum of engagement with or resistance to power. At the same time, they are generations that perceive themselves as resistance activists, motivated to a greater or lesser degree. These are what we call ideologies. These are linear and systems of power branching out. They operate from the top down and the bottom up in relation to the establishment. The first generation, for example, succumbed and even adapted to regime forces, while the second generation produced buds of criticism and consciousness, and the third generation have succeeded in breaking beyond the limits of the education system and developing a space for resistance within it. At the same time, it can be argued that this sweeping division is inaccurate, assuming hegemony is always a crack thing, and when referring to Foucault’s statement: “Where there is resistance, there is resistance” (Foucault 1996: 66). This sparked reflectivity and opposition to the oppressive power, which is reflected in the development of critical pedagogy that challenges canonical knowledge, creates alternative and critical professional discourse and an activist consciousness (Foucault 1982; Marshall 1996), and reinforces their professional role as a force of change in the local education system. An example of this is the Democratic Front for Equality in Israel, which was composed out of the Communist Party and the Islamic Movement, Nimr Darwish and others. This has undermined hegemonic voices and has actively resisted oppression within the educational system and among Kafr Kassem educators.

This study connects generational differences with the sociopolitical and historical experience and raises the question of how to deal with the fact that these differences are not just a generational issue but conflated with the passing of time, because the correlation between generation and time is close. To further address this question, one could compare the dealing with the story of the massacre in the local education system to other traumatic events in the history of the Palestinian minority in Israel, such as the Nakba or the massacre in Deir Yassin.[[4]](#footnote-8) My argument is that such differences are not the product of the past, but of sociopolitical changes in the Arab education system in general that are unique to the Kafr Kassem event. It is not clear that an examination of the general education system would have yielded the same results in relation to the intergenerational distribution of perspectives on other political events. Another decisive factor in this division is the rise of the Islamic movement to power in Kafr Kassem. This has had a considerable impact on awareness raising among the second generation of Kafr Kassem that cannot be ignored. This is so principally because the secondary education system in Israel is under the control of local government. This control has facilitated local government autonomy and backing for the elementary education systems in Kafr Kassem.

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<http://www.tarabut.info/he/articles/article/kafr-kassem-memory/>

1. Sheikh Abdallah Nimr Darwish (1948 - May 14, 2017), who was born and resident of Kafr Kassem, was the founder of the Islamic Movement in Israel. The Islamic Movement competed for the first time the for leadership in six Arab cities in Israel, including Kufor Kassem, in 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A traditional Palestinian dish, the main ingredient of which is olive oil. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
3. The security establishment, usually referred to as Shin Bet or Shabak, is an Israeli intelligence organization subordinate to the Prime Minister’s Office and the Mossad. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
4. The Deir Yassin massacre, carried out on 9April 1948 by the Zionist groups Arjun and Stern, happened two weeks after the signing of a peace treaty requested by the heads of the neighboring Jewish settlements and approved by the people of Deir Yassin village. A large proportion of the population of this village, including children, the elderly, and women was killed. The number of victims is controversial, with Arab and Palestinian sources stating that between 250 and 360 were killed and Western sources stating that the number did not exceed 109. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)