

CURRICULAR COLONIALISM AND GLOBAL HISTORY

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to youth actions
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Curricular Colonialism and Global History

In its various forms, colonialism played a major role in the debate about the creation of international inequalities. However, few would consider the school history curriculum as one of the most significant and still used conflict tools produced by colonial practices.

The Role of History Curricula in Colonial Conflicts

This issue has recently resurfaced¹. At the opening of the 2024/25 school year, the Israeli chairman of the curriculum commission for East Jerusalem described 90% of Palestinian teachers as *“far worse terrorists than those who come with bombs on buses”* because of their teaching history through the curriculum established by the Palestinian Authority (PA). As a remedy to the supposed risk of raising future terrorists, Avihai Buaron called for the enforcement of the Israeli curriculum for all students in the area.

This colonial attempt is not new. In 1967, Israeli authorities confiscated all Palestinian history textbooks, and only after a school strike they could retain the Jordanian curriculum—later replaced by the Palestinian curriculum under international supervision, following the establishment of the PA. Despite resistance, Israel managed to impose **689 textual alterations in 54 Palestinian history books** up until 2012, disregarding Article 50 of the Geneva Convention, which affirms that occupied people have the right to study using their own books, teachers, and curriculum.

Palestine is not the only example of how colonialism extends to schoolbooks. The **Sahrawi people** of Western Sahara face a similar situation: in the areas under Moroccan control, the education system follows the Moroccan curriculum, which does not recognize Sahrawi cultural identity.

Cultural and Educational Implications

Beyond the obvious violations of international law, what cultural and educational implications do those cases highlight? The key issue is the **politicization of History education**.

In most countries, History is designed to construct and reinforce national identity—often in opposition to neighboring or historically rival nations. A striking example is how Italian textbooks refer to the **“barbarian invasions”**, whereas German textbooks describe the same period as the **“age of great migrations”**. While university-level research often transcends these nationalistic boundaries, History curricula in schools remain deeply shaped by them.

Beyond the History of the Oppressed

Addressing this issue requires more than just re-evaluating the history of the oppressed— a history often suppressed by the political and cultural choices of the oppressors. For instance, **Indian history often challenges British colonial narratives** by emphasizing the country’s past political, economic,

1. Chiara Cruciati reported the news regarding the statements of Avihai Buaron on the Palestinian curriculum in “Il Manifesto” of December 17, 2024.



and cultural achievements when Britain was far less developed. While this approach reverses the traditional perspective, it does not fundamentally change the nationalist framework.

A more transformative approach is proposed by global **history**, still rare in school curricula but growing in academic research. Instead of focusing solely on national narratives, global history situates local events within **wider regional or global dynamics**. This approach does not erase differences and conflicts but integrates them into a broader context that reveals interconnections, similarities, and shared histories alongside divisions and tensions.

By shifting the focus from **national citizenship to global citizenship**, global history fosters a more inclusive and interconnected understanding of historical processes—an approach with profound political and educational significance.

Teaching This Topic in Schools

The GET project provides free educational resources to explore these themes in schools (and beyond). In particular, the geo-history textbook—developed by leading researchers using a global history approach—offers valuable insights.

Download the [Geo-History Textbook](#)