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Structural Obstacles to Education Amongst the Palestinian Minority in Israel

Khalil Rinnawi

STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES TO EDUCATION AMONGST THE PALESTINIAN MINORITY IN ISRAEL

Why Education Has Failed to Serve as a Channel of Mobility

Khalil Rinnawi

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Adva Center is an intellectual change agent working to promote greater equality between gender, national and ethnic groups in Israel.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

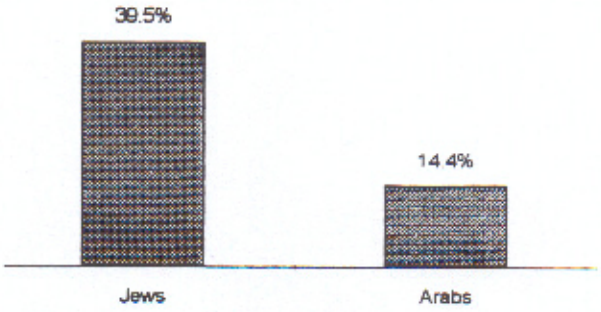
Education plays an important role in shaping the mobility patterns of individuals and groups. For minority groups, which lack access to some of the mobility paths that are available to the dominant group, the education system may serve as an extremely important avenue of mobility.

After the 1948 war, the Palestinian minority in Israel had no access to mobility paths such as military service, civil-service jobs, and industrial development. In contrast, the education system was essentially universalist by virtue of two education laws -- the Compulsory Education Law of 1949 and the State Education Law of 1953 -- and, therefore, could be viewed as a potential conduit to mobility for all under equal terms.

However, for some time, it has been patently clear that the Israeli education system falls far short of serving as a viable channel of mobility for Arab youngsters.

The education system in the Arab communities of Israel has undoubtedly improved since 1948, especially over the past decade; this improvement is part of a general improvement in the circumstances of the country's Palestinian minority. However, if we view education as a major means of socioeconomic mobility in modern society and contemplate the system from a comparative point of view, we find that Arab education still lags far behind Jewish education. One of the major parameters of the performance of the Israeli education system, as a whole and within specific sectors, is the percentage of students within the relevant age group who pass the matriculation exams. A matriculation certificate is a passport to university, attendance at which is deemed to be proof of social mobility. The following table shows the percentage of matriculates in the Arab and Jewish sectors.

Entitlement to Matriculation Certificate, 1994[1]



As the above table shows, the matriculation rate is much lower in the Arab sector than in the Jewish sector. Moreover, Arab students also evince high dropout rates before twelfth grade. In the 1992/93 school year, the average enrollment rate of the 14-17 age cohort was 93 percent in Jewish localities and only 70 percent in Arab localities.[2]

The Arab education system succeeds in leading only 44 percent of the twelfth-grade age cohort to twelfth grade. Of those who make it, only 33 percent, or one-seventh of the age group, pass the matriculation exams. In 1993/94, 53,245 Jewish students took the exams and 31,404 (59 percent) passed: in the Arab sector, 7,402 students took the exams and only 2,992 (40 percent) passed.[3]

Furthermore, many of those who passed the matriculation exams hold certificates that do not admit them to university, either because the number of units they took in the main subjects -- mathematics, English, and Hebrew language -- did not meet the universities' requirements, or because their scores in these subjects, due to poor teaching, were inferior to those of their Jewish peers. In 1993/94, only 5.3 percent of 85,000 university students were Arab.[4]

Finally, many of those who matriculated and are attending universities graduated from a small number of schools affiliated with Christian orders, such as St. Joseph and the American School in Nazareth, the Orthodox School in Haifa, Mar Elias School in I'billin, and the Christian Galilee Gymnasium in `Eilabun.

The Study

Education has always been a focal point of interest for researchers studying the Palestinian minority in Israel. Many studies have focused exclusively on education; others have chosen it as one of the major barometers of the status of this Palestinian group.

Most of this literature compares education in the Arab sector with that in the Jewish sector, on the basis of quantitative data culled from publications of the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics or the Israel Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. The parameters studied include class size, dropout rate, and current and development (investment) budgets. The principal argument arising from these studies is that the main problem in Arab education is resource inadequacy.

Most of these studies blame the poor condition of Arab education on actors outside the Palestinian community in Israel. The accusing finger is pointed almost exclusively at the state authorities. Only a few researchers have attributed much importance to internal community factors, including political and socioeconomic processes that educational research tends to discuss in the context of intact societies.

Accordingly, this study asks two questions: why do so few Arab students qualify for matriculation certificates, and why do the certificates awarded to most Arab high-school graduates fall short of university requirements, especially those of prestigious departments and faculties?

Most studies of education in the Arab sector concentrate on the disparity between Arab and Jewish education. The present study, in contrast, focuses on the broader and deeper question of how well the Arab schools perform -- a question of quality that illuminates two kinds of disparities: between Jews and Arabs and between different schools in the Arab sector. To answer these questions, we will need to review the internal structure of the Arab education system.

The main subjects discussed in this study are:

1. Relations within the school: between teachers and students at the professional and social levels, among teachers, and between teachers and administrators.

2. Relations between school and community, chiefly parents.

3. Relations between schools and municipal authorities.

4. Relations between schools, community, and municipal authorities on the one hand, and the Israel Ministry of Education on the other.

Methodology

This report is based on in-depth interviews conducted in four Arab localities of different sizes in the north. Three of the localities were chosen from a list of those with the lowest matriculation success rates; the fourth was selected as a control group.

The high schools in the first three localities belong to the municipal authority; that of the control locality is under the private ownership of a Christian order.

To maintain confidentiality, we have given the localities fictitious names: al-Jabal, Bustan, ein-Galil, and al-Zeitun. The interviews took place between January and July 1995.

Al-Jabal is a large town in central Galilee, its 26,000 inhabitants affiliated with three religious communities. The municipal authority is affluent and long-established. A large proportion of residents are wage-earners who work in nearby Jewish towns. The proportion of twelfth-graders who qualify for matriculation certificates is 14 percent.

Bustan (pop. 10,000, all Muslim) is situated in the Western Galilee. The village has two large clans and a small number of "satellite clans." Relations between the two clans have been tense since the last local elections. The municipal authority was established fifteen years ago. Some 19 percent of twelfth-graders pass their matriculation exams.

Ein-Galil is a relatively small locality in the Lower Galilee. All of its 7,000 inhabitants are Muslims. Its municipal authority and high school are relatively new. Most of the residents belong to one of two large clans that have been at odds since the last local elections. Some 17 percent of twelfth-graders pass their matriculation exams.

Al-Zeitun, the control locality, is situated in Eastern Galilee and has a population of 5,000, all Christian. The municipal authority is relatively new, but the high school has long been in existence. Eighty percent of twelfth-graders pass their matriculation exams.

Key education officials of each of the four localities were interviewed. In al-Jabal, six interviews were held: with the mayor, an official in the education department, an assistant principal of the high school, two male teachers, and one woman teacher. The teachers taught history, Arabic, and mathematics.

In Bustan, we interviewed five people: the mayor, the director of the education department, the assistant principal of the high school, and teachers of civics and Arabic. In ein-Galil, we held six interviews: with the mayor, the director of the education department, the high-school principal, the head of the parents' committee, and teachers of history and Hebrew.

In al-Zeitun, five interviews were conducted: with the mayor, the principal, the head of the parents' committee, and teachers of Arabic and English.

In addition, preliminary interviews were conducted -- in order to test the interview schedule -- with two Arab men and one woman, all long-tenured educators noted for their political and social involvement in the Arab sector.

The interviews were open-ended but conformed to a guideline. Each interview lasted from one and a half to three hours. The most difficult stage in the data-collection process was selecting the subjects and obtaining their consent to be interviewed, because we found that Arab educators work in an atmosphere of fear of their superiors in the Ministry of Education and the municipal authority.

We obtained the respondents' consent by promising not to mention them or their localities by name. We also assured them that the interviews would take place off the school premises, i.e., in private homes and cafes. All the interviews were tape-recorded, with the subjects' knowledge and consent, and immediately after the interviews, the tapes were transcribed and input into a computer.

Sociopolitical Background

The Palestinian minority who remained within the borders of Israel was the weakest remnant of a nation that had lost a war and dispersed. In 1948, this minority was composed mainly of *fellahin* (subsistence farmers) and uneducated peasants who lacked a solid political and economic basis. The economic and political elite of this community -- practically speaking, its intellectual and urban stratum -- found itself outside the borders of the newly established State of Israel.[5] The remaining Palestinian minority lacked the resources that would give its members socioeconomic mobility, and it also lacked means of production, education, and occupational skills. The principal resource left to the Palestinian minority, which found itself subordinate to a relatively developed and largely modern Jewish majority that controlled the institutions and resources of the state, was a shrinking reserve of farmland that was too small to permit economic development.

When deprived of their traditional sources of livelihood, various minority groups around the world turned to new channels in order to consolidate their future. In the modern era, in which many countries have developed universally accessible education systems, some minority groups regard education as an alternative path to collective progress. For example, Jews in many countries have used education as a highly successful mobility strategy. In the United States, where Jews are one of the smallest minority groups, this strategy has propelled them to the highest social and economic levels.

The Palestinians in Jordan are another example of a collective that adopted education as a strategy for group mobility.[6] Jordanians of Palestinian origin have managed to survive as a group and move into high administrative and economic positions because of education and their awareness of its importance as a major mechanism of individual and group mobility, especially in the non-democratic regime of the Kingdom of Jordan.

Some researchers have attempted to argue that the Palestinian minority in Israel is also moving in this direction. For example, Sami Mari', the first Palestinian researcher to probe Palestinian education in Israel, claims that Palestinian citizens of Israel consider education an alternative to the land they lost after the establishment of the state and have turned it into a path to

socioeconomic mobility and prestige.[7] Another scholar who makes this claim is Majd al-Haj, who argues:

> The deprivation of the Arabs of their economic base [land] and their limited access to the opportunity structure have eventually increased the importance of education for the competition over local and national resources. . . . In the new system education has replaced land as a major element of the individual's socioeconomic status.[8]

However, the poor achievements of Palestinian residents of Israel in high schools and universities do not suggest that state education has become a conduit of mobility for most members of this group. In its educational level, the Arab minority lags far behind the Jewish majority. How can one explain this?

Most researchers have focused on the oppressive policies and discriminatory attitudes of the state apparatus. For example, Majd al-Haj, who examined allocation of resources, concluded that the inferiority of Arab education is rooted in discriminatory resource allocation.[9] Almost all studies on Arab education in Israel make direct or indirect reference to this factor.

The present study chooses to focus on several internal community mechanisms to help us understand why higher education, and education as a whole, have not been adopted as an overarching strategy of collective mobility. We shall argue that internal mechanisms, not only institutional discrimination and inequitable policy, explain the paucity of young Arabs who pass the matriculation examinations and continue to higher education. In essence, we shall argue that these internal mechanisms have transformed education into an internal elitist strategy that facilitates a certain extent of mobility, on the basis of education, for a small elite within this minority group.

As we shall see, the Arab education system is composed of distinct scholastic tracks. One leads to a "full matriculation" certificate and is available to a very small number of students; the second leads to a high-school diploma or a partial matriculation certificate, and most Arab students find themselves here. A third track, already mentioned above, is the dropout track that leads to extramural destinations. The question is how these three tracks came into being.

CHAPTER 2: RELATIONS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

Socioeconomic Status of Arab Teachers

The socioeconomic status of Arab teachers has been declining for the past two decades. In the past, teaching was considered one of the most prestigious and important occupations in Arab society -- a veritable mission. As teachers' remuneration lost ground in comparison with that of other professionals in Arab society, the social prestige of this profession also plummeted.[10] Consequently, the best students are no longer attracted to teaching; they prefer more prestigious professions such as law, medicine, and engineering. Most of those who choose teaching today are high-school graduates with low academic achievements, relatively speaking. The direct result is a poor standard of teaching.

This trend was clearly expressed in our interviews. For example, one long-tenured educator was asked which students chose teaching as a career and what careers he would encourage his own sons, who were excellent students, to pursue. He replied:

> Today, in the school where I teach, the best students go to university to study the liberal professions, because they consider teaching an inferior profession on the basis of the pittance -- the low wages -- that the Education Ministry offers teachers. They also have to contend with the corruption that besets the appointment system. I myself have steered my children, who are all successful students, in every direction except teaching. My two oldest sons have finished medical school, and my third son will finish his studies as a physiotherapist in two years' time. If my fourth child, who is in tenth grade today, proves to be less successful and outstanding than his brothers, I will go crazy, because then I'll have to refer him to teaching, which I would hate to see happen. Thirty-five years ago, when I was appointed to a teaching position, my father threw a big party in my village because his son had done well and had received a prestigious and lucrative job. Back then, when each village had only two or three teachers, everyone in the village envied my father and me because teaching was on the same level as medicine as against the other occupations available in the village. This was true in terms of both salary and social status.

A fifty-year-old history teacher in al-Jabal stated in his interview:

> Long ago, when I was given a teaching position, it was a source of happiness and prestige not only in my father's home but for the entire family, because teaching was the profession of the elite. . . . Anyone destined to be a teacher was entering one of the best career tracks that society had to offer, and it was a sign that he was a successful student. Today, teaching is considered a low-status occupation in terms of income. If you compare teachers' pay to that of a simple construction worker, you'll see that the construction worker always comes out ahead, even though he never studied anything or underwent any training. Teaching is also inferior in social status, in comparison with other liberal professions that require academic training, such as medicine, law, and engineering, and those that do not require academic training, such as building contractor, electricity contractor, and so on. All of them are considered more prestigious.

Because the relative remuneration of teachers is so low today, many teachers have begun seeking additional sources of income in order to make a better living. Consequently, they are not fully devoted to their teaching duties. One of our respondents described this situation:

> Most teachers in local schools, particularly in primary schools, are locals who hold extra jobs. These local teachers neither do their jobs adequately nor provide the children with a suitable level of education. . . and when they are alerted to this fact, they answer: "What do you mean, 'educate'? What do you think they're paying me as a teacher?" They're so badly off that even the parents go easy on them in this respect.

Some people who take up teaching regard this occupation as a temporary duty that is convenient and flexible because of the many holy days and feasts; they find that they can run business or hold another job simultaneously. Therefore, in the opinion of all of our respondents, teachers who are willing to devote their free time to teaching and consider teaching a vocation and way of life, not merely a source of livelihood, are a rapidly disappearing phenomenon.

This feeling was expressed in many interviews. The mayor of al-Zeitun said:

> If you look at the teachers in the primary and junior-high schools in my village -- I am personally acquainted with all of them -- you will find that very few of them consider teaching a calling and a way of life. The others regard teaching as a

> convenient way to earn some money: it's near their homes, it's a flexible profession where you work only until midday, teach only half the year, and spend the other half at home. It shows in their behavior and their speech. . . . However, if you look at the teachers in the local high school, you'll find the opposite: most of them are highly skilled, long-tenured, and serious in their attitude toward the school and the students. A substantial number of them consider their profession a good career. . . . The only thing that bothers them is their relatively low wages in comparison with what they've invested and what people in other professions earn.

A teacher from Bustan said:

> I've noticed that teaching as a profession is losing its prestige and standing. Many teachers took up teaching, especially in primary schools, not because they like it but because it is convenient: the hours are easy and allow them to take care of their households at the same time. For example, most teachers prefer to teach second grade because it lets out at eleven-thirty in the morning rather than one o'clock.

The decline in teachers' socioeconomic status has affected students' attitudes toward members of this profession. Students, particularly successful ones, have begun to treat them with contempt, thinking (as one of the teachers stated) that "In a few years, I will be a lawyer or doctor and achieve a higher socioeconomic status than any of my teachers."

According to the principal of the school in ein-Galil, "The students treat the teachers contemptuously. Some even 'pity' us and try to avoid becoming teachers themselves." The teachers do not conceal this fact from their students or from others, and even make jokes at their own expense. One teacher in Bustan said, "When someone is asked what he does and he replies, 'I'm a teacher,' he's told, 'Never mind; as long as you're working it's no disgrace.' "

Jewish teachers, too, have been losing status over time. However, a factor that has affected the perceived status of Arab teachers specifically is that many talented students who took up teaching for lack of jobs for academically trained Arabs[11] do not contribute to their students as one might expect because of their frustration at finding themselves in a lower-status job than that for which they are qualified.

The mathematics teacher in al-Zeitun, an electrical engineer and a graduate of the Technion who completed his studies with distinction twenty years ago, explained the employment problems that talented degree-holding Arabs face. "In my time, only two Arabs were enrolled in the electrical engineering department, and since we could not find work in our profession, we went back to teaching."

Feminization of the Teaching Profession

Feminization of the teaching profession is a worldwide phenomenon. In the Israeli Jewish education system, it began in the 1950s.[12] Arab women began to enter the teaching profession in large numbers only about a decade ago as Arab society became more receptive to the idea of women working outside the home. Until then, a negligible proportion of Arab women were allowed to go out to work, and they belonged to urban communities only. Today, growing numbers of women are turning to the teaching profession, especially at the primary level, because (among other reasons) it is a convenient profession in that it allows Arab women to balance social and family obligations. "Teaching is the most 'suitable' profession for women," stated one of the respondents, "because teachers work until midday at the most, leaving them the rest of the day to discharge their family duties."

A teacher named Samira opined that "Teaching attracts many women who want two things: to bring in more income to help their husbands, and to get out of the house." Arab society is still considered very patriarchal in its division of family roles. Consequently, a mother who works outside the home, in this case as a teacher, is not exempt from housework. Some women in the Jewish sector also discharge both of these duties, but the attitude that housekeeping is women's work is more entrenched and widespread in the Arab sector, where it embraces all social strata and religious groups, rural and urban alike.

The dual burden on the Arab teacher/mother is detrimental to her performance as a teacher. In fact, the parents and the community expect this to happen, because Arab society considers it a sacred duty for mothers, not nannies, to look after their children.

Another explanation for the influx of women into teaching that emerged from the interviews is that teaching is considered a "safe" profession for women, i.e., one in which, unlike office work, they cannot form relationships with men. This matter, too, originates in the traditional structure that still characterizes Arab society.

The feminization process and the sharp decline in teachers' status have undermined teachers' self-esteem, motivation, and sense of affiliation with the profession and their workplace. In almost all the interviews, teachers themselves expressed the belief that theirs is a profession of low standing and prestige. Another reason that the feminization of teaching has lowered teachers' status is that women in a chauvinistic patriarchal society are deemed less valuable, resulting in social justification for paying them less.

Relations in the Classroom

The classroom is the main theater of the educational process, and teachers and students are the leading actors. The discussion below focuses on interaction between teachers and students and the factors that affect each of these groups. We focus on the frontal teaching method that is customary in Arab schools, teachers' expectations of their students, and social interaction between students and teachers. In the course of our discussion, we refer to several additional factors of importance: teachers' motivation and self-image, teachers' expectations of their students, in-service training, and the appointment of teaching staff.

The Frontal Teaching Method

The teaching process in modern societies has long been dissociating itself from the frontal method, in which the teacher stands and delivers a lecture to a passive class that listens and takes notes. In Arab schools, however, this method is still predominant, even at post-primary levels.[13] This was stressed in all interviews, particularly those with teachers. Frontal teaching is still pre-eminent in Arab schools even though all respondents agreed that it was one of the factors that contributed to the lamentable state of Arab education.

It transpires that frontal teaching is expedient for everyone: teachers, principals, and students. It is convenient for teachers because it absolves them from having to work hard in preparing lesson plans, since the material (particularly for long-tenured teachers) is very familiar, almost word-perfect, being virtually unchanged from that taught in previous years. Furthermore, teachers are more confident with the frontal method because it leaves little room for questions, especially unexpected ones that may embarrass them. The students, knowing that they will be tested on this material at the end of the year, concentrate on it to the exclusion of everything else.

Frontal teaching is convenient for principals for two reasons: it provides assurance that their teachers are communicating the material needed for examination "without wasting time," as one of the interviewees alleged. The principal of the school in Bustan reported that

> Our main problem as principals is to cover the required material before the year is up . . . because this is the school's main *raison d"ˆtre*. Exams are a fact, and the entire system must be geared toward them and all our efforts devoted to them. . . and from my experience as a teacher, there is nothing like the frontal method to ensure that the students cover all the required material before the year is out.

Two teachers expressed similar thoughts: "The principal puts pressure on us in this respect and always reminds us of the end-of-year exams. . . ." One of the principals added that "Exams are our goal. . . . The prestige and caliber of the school are measured against them."

The frontal method also helps teachers maintain class discipline, which, along with silence, is regarded by principals as a cardinal goal. A senior educator emphasized this point:

> Most teachers in schools where I taught were afraid of the principal, particularly in the matter of classroom noise, because according to the principal, noise in the classroom was an indication of the teacher's failure, a sign that the teacher could not control his class. . . . So we would "bombard" the pupils intensively with material, using the frontal method, in order to fill them with fear of exams.

A teacher in Bustan said:

> Because our principal was "square," the teachers always made sure to maintain discipline in their classes for fear of his remarks, which were sometimes made in front of the students.

Frontal teaching is also convenient for the best students in the class because it allows them to show off when asked standard questions that test how well they have reviewed the material before the lesson. They come away satisfied that they have performed as expected in order to pass the end-of-year exams. It is also convenient for weaker students, because it allows them to remain passive; after all, they are not expected to answer or ask questions. Non-frontal teaching methods would force all students to be active by constantly stimulating and challenging them.

When asked, "How many teachers in your school would you be prepared to dismiss?" many of the respondents, particularly teachers and administrators in all localities (including the principal of the school in al-Zeitun), replied that they would fire a good part of the teaching staff in their school, mainly because they unreservedly adopt antiquated frontal teaching methods. The director of the education department in Bustan reported having "a serious problem with 30 percent of the teachers here because of their old-fashioned outlook, especially in the teaching methods they use." He was willing to dismiss them immediately, explaining that "There is no chance that they'll change their methods, because this is the only method they know."

The story of one of the teachers substantiates this. Samira (a fictitious name) was a relatively new teacher who taught tenth grade. She had a B.A. and was working on her master's degree. She recounted that she tried to modify the teaching method in her school by introducing an alternative method that took weaker students into account and made less use of frontal instruction. Samira described how lessons were ordinarily taught in the school:

> The teacher enters the classroom at the beginning of the year, stands at the front, and begins to recite material. In the very first month of the year, he begins mentally sorting the pupils into those less able, usually the majority, and the standouts, according to how well and how often they do their homework. The teacher's expectations of the youngsters' ability are borne out after tests are given in the first month. After that, the lesson takes place between the teacher and the handful of standout students, who answer his occasional questions. Most of the other pupils are not focused on the lesson, and the teacher rarely even tries to stimulate them to take part. This approach confines most of the interaction to the teacher and a few students only. The students aren't given a chance to work together, so they cannot

> progress. . . . In a nutshell, the teacher expects only a small minority of students to succeed, and he works in the light of these expectations. It is usually this minority that does well at the end of the year.

Samira used a different method. As she described it, she presented the material as topics for discussion and elicited the participation of all students. She also reseated the students, usually placing them in circles, each circle constituting a discussion group, and sometimes arranging them in one large circle. When she had to present material using the standard frontal method, she made a point of engaging all students in the lesson. Her classroom was too long for this; the last two rows of desks were too distant, thus leaving several students uninvolved and generally oblivious to the "action" in the vicinity of the teacher and the blackboard. To correct the problem, Samira rotated the youngsters who sat in the last two rows.

Samira reports that her new methods were popular with the students, particularly the "weaker" among them, who, in her opinion, usually formed the majority of the class. However, they were not popular with her colleagues, who pointedly expressed their disapproval. More importantly, her innovations were frowned upon by the school administrators, who pointed out on several occasions that her class made noise and disrupted the school's placid atmosphere. As she explains, "Everyone around me was dissatisfied. . . but what mattered to me were the students. Most of them, especially the weaker ones, enjoyed the method and made progress in their studies." Samira resigned after about four years; today, after having earned a master's degree, she works as a private psychologist.

Other teachers, asked to describe a typical teacher in their school, presented similar accounts of how lessons were conducted. A teacher in ein-Galil said:

> . . . A typical teacher is one who thinks of his job as factory work. . . . He has to get through the material. Never mind whether the students understand it or not; the main thing is to cover the material before the end of the year. He does this first of all because he's used to doing it, and second because he is subject to pressures from all sides: from the students, the principal, the parents, and the Ministry of Education. According to the principal, a good teacher is a one who manages to "transmit" all the material to the pupils and keeps the class quiet. Therefore, a

> teacher comes into class with material that he prepared when he first began teaching -- with a few updates -- opens his exercise book, and begins to lecture to the students seated in front of him. A handful of students listen to what he is saying and try to take notes; a second group, by far the largest, begins to scribble without understanding what they are writing. . . hoping that they will understand afterwards because they have to take down what the teacher is saying. And the third group attends the class in the physical sense only. . . . According to most teachers, these students are "incapable" of understanding. At the end of the school year, the students take exams written by the teachers on the basis of the material taught them through the frontal method. The students who took notes get the highest scores, not because they understood the material but because they memorized it. . . and they forget it a week later.

Strict Discipline and Hierarchy

It transpires that the predisposition to frontal teaching belongs to a broader set of behaviors. Most of the educators interviewed explained that discipline in and out of class was the main concern of the Arab teacher. "There is no doubt," one of the respondents said,

> that discipline has to be at the root of the entire teacher-student relationship -- even at the expense of other things such as teaching the material or encouraging creativity. . . . Relations are based on coercion rather than on mutual respect, democracy, or liberalism. This system leaves students with a bare minimum of room for freedom of expression and conduct.

Discipline is attained because the teacher forces the students to maintain it. This coercive system is the result of two factors. First, it is a reflection of the patriarchal structure of Arab society,[14] in which the husband imposes his will on his family; recall that most Arab teachers are still men. Thus, for example, a teacher in ein-Galil said:

> . . . For me, order and discipline are the most important things in the educational process. Studying the material without learning manners and order is like buying a car without wheels. . . .

Another senior educator stated, "I find it hard to teach a pupil who does not respect the class rules . . . and does not respect me." He added, after being asked about the contrasting attitudes of Jewish and Arab teachers toward their students, "The Jews have democracy but it comes with a lack of discipline that affects the teacher's performance. Therefore, I think a true educator is more likely to succeed in the Arab sector than in the Jewish sector."

School systems are built along hierarchical lines. These characteristics are especially pronounced in the Arab sector, thus minimizing internal democracy in the school and relegating the student to the margins.[15] As one of the respondents expressed it:

> To this day, it is very hard to find teachers who educate their pupils in freedom of speech, who teach them to have an open mind. . . so they can tell their teachers what they really think about a given matter without being in awe of the teacher's overwhelming powers.

One teacher, asked about discipline and teacher-pupil relations, had the following to say:

> Discipline is sacrosanct; it protects the teacher's honor. I'll tell you what happens with me. Sometimes I joke with the pupils, and they joke back in exactly the same way. In my opinion, this is disrespectful behavior on the part of the pupils toward the teacher. So I once turned to one of the pupils who had joked back and explained that he had been disrespectful. He burst into tears. This showed me that there is respect for Arab teachers. On the other hand, pupils in Jewish schools feel that they have the right to smoke, to behave immorally, to call the teacher by name. . . . I think this much freedom is unwarranted. . . .

One of the senior educators summarized the issue in the following way:

> In our school, the students' answers have to be just like the teachers'! And even if the student's answer is correct, the teacher rejects it because it isn't his own! An Arab teacher really turns out clones of himself.

Thus frontal teaching and a fixation on discipline are parts of a behavioral pattern motivated by a patriarchal worldview that places male authority at the pinnacle of the social order of respect.

Low Expectations

Our interviews show clearly that Arab teachers expect little of their students. This is particularly evident when we compare these expectations with those that Arab teachers believe Jewish teachers have of their students. This is true not only regarding expectations of students but also of expectations of the teachers themselves, especially in comparison with expectations of Jewish teachers. An Arab teacher is perceived as being "mainly in search of a livelihood" and a large proportion of Arab teachers are regarded as insufficiently skilled -- not only regarding their familiarity with the material but also concerning their personal aptitude for the profession. In contrast, Jewish teachers are regarded as "more devoted, open-minded, and intellectual. . . . Jewish teachers like their work, invest a lot in their pupils. . . . For them, teaching is a sacred national mission," stated the mayor of Bustan.

In contrast, the respondents apportion some of the blame for the condition of their education system on the level of their students -- as borne out by their answers to the question: "In your opinion, is there a difference between Jewish teachers' and Arab teachers' expectations of their students?" Nearly all of the respondents -- not only teachers but everyone involved in education -- answered, "Teachers in the Jewish sector expect much more of their students than Arab teachers expect of theirs." Moreover, the respondents also expected less of their pupils than they would of Jewish pupils. The principal of the ein-Galil high school asserted:

> You're fooling yourself if you compare the level of pupils in my school to that of the Jewish kids in the nearby Jewish town. . . . There is simply no comparison. Sometimes I try to urge my teachers to work harder with the pupils . . . but at a certain point I stop because we cannot get anything more out of pupils such as those in my school than we are getting today. . . .

Subject Specializations and Tracks

The teachers' expectations of their students do not exist in a vacuum. The Arab schools in Israel developed on the basis of methods first used in Jewish schools, a system involving tracking and

specializations that effectively differentiate among students. Unlike the private high school in al-Zeitun, which is strongly selective, the other three schools in our sample belong to the State system. They accept all applicants, and *a fortiori* all those who live in the locality. Local students of high-school age attended local primary schools, which are certainly no better than the high schools and are probably inferior to them.[16]

Students are screened and selected during their high-school studies and are divided into different specialties when they reach eleventh grade. The highest achievers -- no more than 25 percent of the total -- are placed in the science specialty, in which physics, chemistry, and mathematics are studied at a high level. Lower achievers -- 30-50 percent of all students -- are placed in the humanities specialty, where they study history, geography, biology, and mathematics at a moderate level. The remainder are sorted into vocational tracks, where they study applied subjects, mostly for blue-collar occupations: carpentry, metalwork, and mechanics for boys, sewing and home economics for girls.

Thus the State education system, of a lower standard than the private system, is itself characterized by a structure of unequal opportunity. It has "good" majors (as defined by some respondents) that lead to good matriculation certificates and future academic opportunities, and "less good" majors that lead to partial matriculation certificates or none at all.

Local students who do not attend local high schools fall into two categories: first, successful students and/or some children of local notables or intellectuals, whom their parents enroll in private schools out of town in order to ensure that they enter the academic track. In the second category are the low achievers, who are barred from all subject specializations in their localities. Their options are to look for vocational schools out of town or drop out of the education system.

The remarks of some of our respondents show that the high-school specializations are distinguished by many factors. The school faculty views the specializations unequally and has different expectations of students in one specialty as opposed to another. It follows that the school staff determines the students' fate at an early stage through its expectations of them and its

different attitudes toward students in the various specializations. According to one respondent, "By the end of the first semester, the teachers already know where to steer their students." Many teachers also reported that, in speaking among themselves, they often express their attitudes toward the different specialties by using terms such as "good" and "less good."

Second, it was found that principals and municipal authorities invested more material and other resources in scientific majors than in other specialties, especially the humanities one, and a large majority of respondents, even in al-Zeitun, justified this discrimination. When asked "In your opinion, should a strategy of equality be adopted in material investment and apportionment of resources in education?" many concurred with the views of an educator in al-Jabal:

> In principle, resources should be equally divided, but that should not come at the expense of the better students, in whom the largest possible investment should be made in order to assure their advancement. . . . You mustn't let the poorer students hold you back.

Third, the "best" teachers in the school are usually assigned to the "good" specialties. According to one of the respondents,

> Teachers who work in "weaker" (vocational and humanities) specialties are less talented than those who teach science. . . . They are usually new teachers who work part-time and under inferior conditions to those of the senior teachers, who prepare students for matriculation examinations.

Because our analysis is based on qualitative rather than quantitative data, it is hard to state exactly how students are distributed within each specialty on the basis of ascriptive attributes. According to most of the respondents, however -- especially the teachers -- there is a correlation between the students' ascriptive characteristics and their majors. Many teachers noted that offspring of academics and members of high socioeconomic classes usually enrolled in "good" specialties, and that a sizable proportion of vocational students came from large, uneducated and socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Many respondents stressed this point in their interviews.

Vocational majors are fairly new in the Arab sector, having been introduced only a decade ago in order to facilitate the expansion of Arab high-school enrollment. These specialties, including some that are termed "technological" in order to bolster their prestige, do not lead to a matriculation certificate. They are not offered on a high technological or vocational level as are programs in the best technological schools in the Jewish sector, such as Bosmat in Haifa, which attracts good and even outstanding students.[17] The Arab students referred to these majors are the less successful ones. However, the very possibility of their staying in school gives them and their parents the feeling that they belong to a regular scholastic program and that they will graduate with an occupation in hand. This is more an illusion than a real contribution. Surprisingly, most of the Arab leadership, and particularly the educators, have been asking the Education Ministry to open more and more specialties of these kinds in the Arab sector.[18]

Self-Fulfilling Prophecies

Robert Rosental, namesake of the "Rosental effect," shows a clear correlation between teachers' expectations of students and students' prospects of success in these teachers' classes.[19] When teachers hold high expectations of certain students, they are more likely to succeed, and vice versa.[20] Teachers base their expectations on achievement criteria such as willingness to answer questions, comprehension of material, and preparation of homework in a manner satisfactory to the teacher. Such expectations, however, are in turn based on the youngsters' ascriptive characteristics: the scholastic achievements of their elder siblings, the family's socioeconomic status, the parents' level of education, and so on.

Even in the absence of pressure from parents, teachers favor certain students over others, i.e., those from families that have a "scholastic reputation" (families whose older siblings are known to have done well in school) or those from affluent or socially prestigious families. One of the teachers explained:

> Our teachers usually take the student's family background into account. . . . For example, they usually treat those from traditional, rural, or disadvantaged surroundings as inferior, and conversely they regard those from an urban, high-class background with greater respect and esteem, although not always. If a student from a prestigious (affluent, socially prominent, or educated) family does poorly in his studies, the teacher thinks: So-and-so isn't doing well; where are his parents? Why aren't they doing something about it?! When another student (from a disadvantaged family with little educated) performs poorly, the teacher's reaction is totally different: Forget it! He's from the wrong side of the tracks; what chance does he have? Look at his parents and his family. It can't be helped. Students who have problems in their studies and come from non-prestigious families are sent home without any hesitation. . . .

The overall trend in the respondents' answers may be summarized as follows: "Children of educated parents have a greater chance of scholastic success. . . . I feel that children of parents who are academically trained or socioeconomically well off should usually be among the most successful." They attempt to explain this by saying that higher-class parents expect more of their children, whereas disadvantaged parents do not feel that they can expect much of their offspring. Furthermore, disadvantaged families are poor, and the children know they have no chance of attending university; this in itself is sufficient to depress their achievements in school.

Another explanation, offered by the principal of the school in ein-Galil, is that "There is usually a positive correlation between a family's socioeconomic class and its children's diligence and scholastic motivation." The opinion of the mayor of al-Jabal on this matter is that

> There is a great difference in scholastic achievements between children of laborers and children of academics and the affluent. The difference is in favor of the latter, because laborers usually have large families and are poorly educated, so they cannot help their children as the academics and the affluent can.

The mayor of Bustan believes that

> It shouldn't be this way, but practically speaking, the children of intellectuals, who are willing to devote time to their children either by helping them with their studies or by visiting the school frequently, usually do better.

Tension stemming from local elections also affected relations between teachers and both students and parents at the school in ein-Galil. Some teachers who preferred a certain candidate favored students whose parents supported the same candidate and exhibited strain in their attitude toward students whose parents supported the rival candidate.

Relations among Teachers

Social and professional relations among teachers are an important factor in generating a pleasant and productive school atmosphere. Such an atmosphere encourages teachers to invest more in their work and, indirectly, leads to greater success on the part of students. Bear in mind that the schools in our study are situated in relatively small villages, in which residents are acquainted with each other because of direct daily interaction. If we compare the three State schools in our model with the private school, which served as our control group, we find that almost all respondents in Bustan, ein-Galil, and al-Jabal reported tense and polarized relations in their schools, while all those in al-Zeitun reported sound or excellent relations among teachers. Not only the principal and teachers, but also the mayor and the head of the education department, spoke of the excellent atmosphere in the private high school, the result of positive interactions among teachers, who consider themselves a united group of professional colleagues *and* friends. In Bustan, however, considerable tension and polarization were reported between two major groups of teachers: one comprised of the higher-ranking teachers, most of whom came from outside the village, and the other comprised of recently hired local teachers. The situation reached the stage where new teachers, indirectly backed by the municipal authority, attempted to wrest slices of the school's appointments "pie" from the senior teachers, who were unwilling to relinquish any of their positions.

One teacher summed up the situation as follows:

> We senior staff members, who come from out of town, feel unwanted in the village and the school. They take our functions, such as subject coordinator, and our teaching hours, and hand them over to the new local teachers. . . . These changes are carried out by the new principal, who does this under pressure from the

> municipal authority, which wishes to curry favor with several clans that supported it. This also strengthens the hand of the new principal, who wants to demonstrate his strength vis-...-vis the senior staff members, who regard themselves as fixtures in the system, as the principal puts it. . . .

In ein-Galil, polarization and tension among teachers is clan-based. ein-Galil is populated by two large clans that compete for everything in the village. The teachers, who also belong to these two clans, fight over appointments and the class schedule. The high school in al-Jabal, too, is engulfed in struggle, but here the issues are religious. The village is divided between Christians and Muslims, and teachers affiliated with the different faiths struggle for the same issues: assignments and schedule. The municipal authority, the employer and the agency directly responsible for the high school in these three localities, is actively involved in these struggles by supporting one side over another, to the extent of preferring a certain teacher over another on political or personal grounds.[21]

Notably, the teaching staff in the private school in al-Zeitun is highly stable, having experienced little turnover in more than fifteen years. The other three schools report a high rate of teacher turnover, especially in basic subjects such as English, mathematics, Arabic, and Hebrew.

Relations between Teachers and School Administration

The school administration also takes part in the aforementioned struggles, usually by supporting one teacher or a group of teachers over another. In Arab schools, relations between principals and teachers, like those between students and teachers, are based on a rigid and coercive hierarchy.[22] Principals possess vast authority that they wield to impose their will.

Many teachers stressed the importance of the teacher-principal relationship. The schools in Bustan, al-Jabal, and ein-Galil described this relationship as very intricate. One of the teachers in Bustan stated that

> The principal is a religious, insular man who does not have an open-minded educational approach. . . . He is very strict about rules and regulations. . . . He is

> not flexible. He is much too pedantic in keeping to rules and bureaucracy. . . . For him, order is the be-all and end-all.

Other teachers in this school seconded this account. They describe themselves as depressed by this principal's response to their work as teachers. He neither encourages them nor expresses appreciation for their having done a good job, but is quick to criticize mistakes and poor work, often through warning letters. One of the respondents, a member of the administration, alleged that the principal sends his teachers at least four such letters each month.

The principal of the high school in al-Jabal refused to be interviewed for this study, explaining that the Education Ministry enjoins him from giving interviews without permission. However, we were able to form an impression of his working methods from his teachers, who stressed how authoritarian and autocratic he was.

The principal of the high school in ein-Galil agreed to be interviewed without Education Ministry consent. In the interview, which took place at his home, he quietly justified the hard, critical line he sometimes asserted vis-a-vis some of the teachers: "They're accustomed to this system. Some of them do not know the meaning of liberalism and a sense of responsibility. Such teachers require monitoring and authoritativeness. . . ."

As for the principal of the Bustan high school, who also refused to be interviewed without his superordinates' permission, the teachers who were interviewed described him as so strict and "square" that the new teachers, especially women, were afraid of him. He was also accused of treating his teachers unequally and unfairly and of "playing favorites." One of the teachers claimed:

> He is extremely bureaucratic and meticulous when it comes to rules. . . but he focuses on trivialities and forgets what's important, and turns a blind eye to flagrant mistakes made by certain teachers whom he favors. It begins with disregard of things such as tardiness and ends with appointing assistants and handing out coordination assignments or positions. . . . This creates a great deal of tension, jealousy, and conflicts among teachers. He refuses to listen to any opinion that does not fit in with his own and regards such opinions as opposition. . . . Even worse, most issues brought up at staff meetings have already been decided before the meeting. He is inconsiderate of the teachers' problems.

The picture in the Bustan high school is even more complex. One of the teachers spoke of the school secretary as having

> a strong personality and considerable influence over the principal, whom he uses to attain nearly total control of the school. He also interferes with everything that goes on in the school, and even worse, makes decisions on many issues, including hiring of teachers, distribution of school hours, appointment of deputy assistant principals, purchases for the school, etc.

The following remark made by one of the teachers was corroborated by the director of the municipal education department:

> The secretary is motivated by personal considerations, not professional ones. He makes decisions that are tabled for "discussion" at staff meetings, and was even behind the dismissal of one of the best teachers in the school, a mathematics teacher, because they did not get along. At the end of the school year, the secretary told him, "You're not going to teach in our school next year. . . ."

Another teacher described the behavior of this secretary as follows:

> He exploits the weak personalities and status of some of the teachers, and he treats them insultingly. For example, when speaking to a teacher on the telephone, he might hang up in the middle of a conversation. He exploits new teachers by persuading them to give up privileges in favor of other teachers who are in league with him . . . He changes the grades of some students as he sees fit, leading to arguments and disputes between him and the teachers. He also decides on all purchases of materials and equipment for the school, often without consulting anyone -- including the teachers, who are the ones who use this equipment. . . .

The state of affairs in this school is known not only to the school faculty but to outsiders, including the municipal officials responsible for the school -- the director of the education department and the mayor himself.

The pattern of principal-teacher interaction in the other public high schools, those in al-Jabal and ein-Galil, is hardly different. Here, again, there were reports of a rigid, coercive, and bureaucratic approach by the principal, favoritism in treatment of teachers, unfair distribution of

administrative assignments and teaching hours, and unprofessional considerations in decisions affecting teachers.

Reports concerning the private high school in al-Zeitun, in contrast, speak of a liberal, open-minded, and democratic relationship between the principal and the teachers, despite the bureaucratic structure in which they function. Most decisions were taken in consultation with the teachers. The teachers pointed out that the principal treated them with respect, that they accepted his comments in a friendly spirit, and felt that they understood him.

CHAPTER 3: SCHOOL, PARENTS, AND COMMUNITY

Parents' Attitudes toward Education and the School

Relations between parents and the school have a major effect on the formal and informal educational processes that go on in the schoolroom. The parents are important partners in the education process, whether their role is active or passive.

Arab society in Israel is basically that of the rural peasant remnant of Palestinian society that survived after the urban, affluent, and intellectual elite departed in 1948. Many of the first post-1948 Arab generation considered education as vastly important, although they themselves lacked it. The new elite made sure that its offspring acquired formal education at any price, evidently to compensate for its own inability to have done the same. This was manifested in a large increase, albeit within a small population base, in the percentage of academically trained among Arab citizens of Israel since the 1960s: from 1.5 percent in 1961 to 11 percent in 1993.[23]

This interest in education does not seem to be matched by active involvement in the school process. Parents' attitudes toward the school are marked by extreme indifference. All the teachers and principals interviewed pointed out that a high percentage of parents never visit the school at all: many do not attend parent-teacher meetings and refrain from visiting on an individual basis. The result is lack of public review of the work of the school staff, including the principal, teachers, and other officials. On the one hand, this gives the staff *carte blanche* to do what it believes best; on the other hand, the parents' apathy and the absence of feedback deprive the teaching staff of a sense of appreciation and encouragement.

A few exceptional parents do visit the school frequently in order to monitor their children's progress. Generally speaking, they are the parents of good students, and most are educated persons who hold white-collar jobs. Another noticeable pattern is intervention by parents, usually village notables or the socioeconomically privileged, with teachers and principals to ensure their children's scholastic success. They accomplish this by building personal relationships with staff members or by applying indirect pressure.

Parents' social standing is an important factor in determining their children's status in school. Parental status has considerable influence on teachers' attitude toward students, with respect to behavior in class, grading of examinations, and other activities. One of the teachers described in no uncertain terms how this pressure affects a teacher:

> . . . Teachers are less careful about harming the child of parents who are poor or who have problems than the son of an affluent man who has power and high status in the village. . . .

Another teacher said:

> . . . Frankly. . . I am more attentive to, and more concerned about, a student whose parents I know. Particularly when it comes to marking tests, I know from the start that I have to take many factors into account . . . and be more accurate. I have already internalized the fact that this is the son of So-and-so, and therefore I must pay attention to every detail concerning him. But a student whose parents or family I do not know hardly cuts ice with me. I tell myself that this is a weak student, and that's that. . . .

Parents' Utilitarian Attitude toward Teachers and Schools

The interviews point to a recent tendency among parents to regard schools and their staff as tools in the service of their children's socioeconomic mobility. In this utilitarian mindset, the school is no longer important as an educational institution; it is merely a "grade factory" that provides a passport to university and, especially, to professions that ensure economic success, such as law, dentistry, and engineering. This trend, caused by the changes that have swept Israeli Arab society in the past decade, has (among other things) eroded the socioeconomic status of teachers, as mentioned above. Paradoxically, however, parents today are prepared to settle for less-dedicated teachers. One of our respondents, a senior teacher and educator, alleged that

> The school today has become a grade factory. Teachers play a purely technical role in training students, meaning that they recite the subject matter, give and mark exams, and award certificates to children of the affluent and the privileged so they

> may enroll in university and acquire a liberal academic profession with which they will make money and climb the social ladder.

Furthermore, village notables and leaders, as well as some intellectuals and white-collar workers including teachers, who cannot assure their children's success in the local high school because of its low quality, enroll their children in prestigious out-of-town schools, most of which are private. This trend was most noticeable in the three localities that have State high schools. In ein-Galil, the children of most town-council members and intellectuals attend private schools in a nearby city. In al-Jabal, which is populated by members of three different religious groups, one of the teachers judges that

> most of the Christian parents -- who are considered the locality's socioeconomic and intellectual elite -- send their children to private schools outside the village, and only the less able Christian students, children of non-intellectual parents, are left behind in the local high school.

In this locality, a rumor has it that most of the high-school teachers are not suitably trained or qualified and were appointed to their jobs by the town council for clan and partisan reasons. This affects the judgment of local parents when they choose their children's school. Thus we see how the community, through parents' enrollment decisions, affects the level of the local school. Despite the community's dissatisfaction with its schools, there is hardly any indication in any of the three localities of an attempt on the part of the community, including the parents' committee, to organize in order to bring collective pressure to bear on the relevant officials -- those of the municipal council, who are directly responsible for the school and its staff, or those at the national level, i.e., in the Ministry of Education -- to rectify this dismal situation.

Parents' Committees

Although each of the three localities has a parents' committee, these committees rarely function. When one of the students has a problem, the committee members and the parents intervene to solve it. "These committees meet once or twice a year, but nothing practical comes of the meetings," commented a teacher from ein-Galil. Moreover, the parents' committees coordinate

their actions with the staff. The dormancy of the parents' committees is the result of lack of initiative, lack of organization, and low parent awareness of the committee's potential importance in influencing events in the school and the educational process as a whole. However, remarks by the mayor of Bustan suggest that the principal, for his part, is not eager to involve the parents' committee in the school's internal affairs, "because he's afraid and suspicious of change in matters under his control."

Comparison of the parents' committees in the schools in Bustan, al-Jabal, and ein-Galil, with that of the private school in al-Zeitun shows that involvement of the committees in the first three localities was negligible. In one locality, it was actually feared that involvement by the parents' committee would be detrimental to the school's internal affairs. A teacher in Bustan described this situation:

> The principal regards the parents' committee in Bustan as a negative force because it intervenes in matters outside its competence, such as student admissions, hiring of teachers, and public criticism of the principal. Therefore, the principal always tries to ignore the parents' committee and keep it at arm's length.

The principal of the high school in al-Zeitun, in contrast, told us that the parents' committee of his school plays a productive and vital role, particularly in creating an educational atmosphere in his facility. This atmosphere is assured by keeping local disputes and problems out of the school and by material assistance and fundraising. According to the principal, "The parents' committee has been tremendously helpful in purchasing land to expand the school and supporting other activities on behalf of the school."

CHAPTER 4: RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

The status of the municipal authority as the agent directly and officially in charge of local high schools makes this authority an important player in the local educational process, especially in the context of high schools. Most of our respondents spoke of unhealthy relations between municipal officials and school staff -- relations often marked by acrimony between municipal officials, particularly the mayor and the director of the education department, on the one hand, and the principal or some members of the staff, on the other.

Such was the case in al-Jabal. Most of the teachers employed in the local high school when it was established (fifteen years ago) were from out of town because of a shortage of academically trained candidates in the locality. The number of local academics has risen recently and, because they have few employment options, many of them have asked the municipal authority to hire them as teachers in this school. This request has created a serious problem. The local academics began to lobby the mayor through their families, who support the mayor,[24] and through members of the municipal council. The municipal authority would like to honor their requests but cannot dismiss the out-of-town senior staff without justifiable cause. Therefore, it has begun to harass these teachers in hopes of forcing them to resign. It has begun discriminating against them, as one of the teachers explained: "The thing that concerned the council treasury was the 'outside' teachers' travel cost."

The mayor has a long list of grievances against the school and its teachers. Specifically, he accuses the latter of lack of dedication in their work. In his opinion,

> The teachers in the local high school do not consider their profession a calling. They do not keep tabs on their students [in school], let alone after school hours. . . . They teach the material in class in an alienating way and do not give a thought to the student and his future.

The director of the municipal education department, in contrast, pointed to irregularities in the municipal authority, unfair treatment by the municipal authority of some high-school teachers,

particularly senior staff members, and spoke of special perks given to new local teachers. We scheduled an interview with him and agreed to speak on any topic of his choosing, but he failed to appear. He later apologized and let it be known that he was afraid of dismissal in the event that his consent to be interviewed were leaked to his superiors. The estrangement between the variuos officials led the mayor himself to declare it necessary to establish a commission of inquiry to probe the state of education in his locality.

The pressure applied to the "outside" teachers was manifested in lack of advancement, in that the deprivation of administrative assignments and other privileges, and in the reduction of their teaching hours. Influence peddling and political-support gambits that local teachers played with the municipal authority officials, especially at election time, exacerbated the conflicts and polarization within the school and between the school and the authority. Another aggravating factor was religious affiliation: most of the "outside" teachers were Christian and the municipal authority was dominated by Muslims. Local Christian teachers also began to feel threatened and believed that their advancement was slower than that of Muslim and Druze teachers who were close to the mayor. The swapping of jobs between the principal and vice-principal, a confidant of the mayor and member of a family that supported him, made the strife even worse. The former principal, now the assistant principal, sympathized with the senior staff and spoke its language, having been raised and educated with them in the same school. Because of his consent to the swapping of duties, these teachers perceived him as a traitor. One of the teachers alleged:

> In exchange for lavish pension rights from the local authority, he agreed to forfeit his position and abandon the senior teachers to the mercies of a principal who was in cohorts with the mayor.

The mayor, in his interview, mentioned the poor relations between the local authority and the school staff, whom he blamed for the low level of student achievements. "They are irresponsible," he explained. "They consider their job a mere source of livelihood, not a calling." He blamed every possible player for the poor condition of the high school: the Education Ministry, parents, teachers, and the central-government authorities. Only the municipal authority, "which

gave the school and the teachers everything they wanted," was utterly free of blame. Concluding his remarks, the mayor said, "We, as the municipal authority, have no role or part to play in dealing with local educational problems. . . . Our only function is to provide whatever equipment the school lacks." The conflicts and disputes between the school and the municipal authority have continued and commanded main headlines in the Arabic press, both local and elsewhere.

In many cases, political considerations inform mayors' decisions not only on education affairs but in many other fields of activity. All those interviewed, without exception, stated that personal and political considerations join with professional factors in determining the appointment of teachers. The Education Ministry and the central-government establishment have long given such appointments their backing. It is true that this behavior has been less flagrant recently because the Education Ministry has become more open, especially since a new leadership replaced the representatives of rightist-religious Jewish parties that had dominated the ministry for many years. However, this method has not yet been totally eradicated, one reason being that the Arab education system itself is still staffed by many of the old appointees.

The appointments system fosters dependency of teachers on the municipal authority and the Education Ministry. In other words, teachers feel personally indebted to their superiors, especially those who were directly involved in their appointments -- the inspector, the mayor, the principal, and so on. The meaning of this dependency is that teachers maintain allegiance and refrain from expressing criticism. The facts speak for themselves: most teachers, principals, and assistant principals whom we sought to interview off campus refused to be interviewed without permission from the Education Ministry.

Teachers and principals who were interviewed stated that a rather large proportion of teacher appointments were tainted, but all the mayors asserted that their decisions were guided by professional considerations only. To clarify the picture, let us describe what happened in Bustan.

In answer to our question, "Do you take political and coalition factors into consideration when you, as the mayor, deal with the appointment and dismissal of teachers, especially those who are not suitably trained or qualified to teach?" the mayor of Bustan answered:

> Even if my coalition disintegrates and they withdraw their confidence in me, I would not agree to compromise in this matter and carry on as if nothing had happened, particularly when it concerns the appointment of an unsuitable or unqualified person as a teacher.

However, the director of the municipal education department in Bustan noted the worsening situation in the school and added that the mayor, who was aware of many defects, refrained from intervening for political and personal reasons. For example, he mentioned the school secretary, the official described above as acting arbitrarily. Thus, for example,

> . . . With no serious justification . . . the secretary arranged the dismissal of one of the teachers who lived outside the village, even though he had been one of the best teachers in the school, and even though he taught mathematics, one of the most important subjects.

Other respondents corroborated this statement. The director of the education department added:

> The mayor is extremely diplomatic in his interaction with the school staff, because he has other considerations concerning them, which keep him from getting involved. He does not do enough to change things in the school, particularly in respect to the secretary's erratic behavior. . . As the mayor, he is concerned with being on good terms with everyone.

Relations between the municipal authority and the school are more complicated in ein-Galil. Here, the mayor belongs to the largest local clan, and the high-school principal belongs to the second-largest clan. These two clans control the village and dispute nearly everything. The principal claims:

> The mayor tries to foil everything I do. He withholds the school's basic needs. Sometimes we get only a few items of what we ask for, and sometimes we get nothing. . . . He never loses an opportunity to attack me personally, as well as the school, even in unofficial forums such as people's homes. . . . He always accuses me of mismanaging the school, of being irresponsible, of lacking education, and of harming the local students' moral values. . . . Once we took the students for an outing, and they danced and had a good time and generally fooled around a bit, but

> within limits. The next day, he spread rumors around the village that I had left the students unsupervised and encouraged them to behave immorally, particularly with members of the opposite sex. This rumor found its way to the village muezzin, who focused his Friday sermon in the mosque against me. . . .

One of the teachers, affiliated with neither of the two large clans, also gave this account. The teacher criticized both the mayor and the principal, contending that their failure to cooperate, caused by the stubbornness and clan considerations that motivated both of them, was responsible for the school's deterioration.

Another teacher in al-Galil pointed an accusing finger at the mayor:

> The mayor does nothing without consulting his clan cronies, and he does not cooperate with the principal, who belongs to the other clan. He does the same to all officials in the village who do not belong to his clan or do not support him. . . .

The principal concluded: "The mayor not only refuses to cooperate with me; he even tries to intervene indirectly in what happens in the school in order to generate pressure through certain teachers who have asked me for promotions."

The mayor's political considerations are manifested in matters other than teacher appointments, such as providing the school with the equipment it needs. For example, the director of the education department in Bustan said:

> During the previous mayor's term in office, political considerations figured in almost every issue. For example, for three years the principal asked the mayor, through me, to provide funding for purchase of computers so the school could establish computer classes. The mayor turned down the request. . . on personal grounds, because the principal did not support the mayor in the elections. . . . Suddenly, three days before the last elections, he bought the school twice as many computers as they had asked for and installed them in the school without coordinating this with anyone, even the principal. . . . Evidently, this was his way of trying to buy the votes of the principal and the staff members.

Nonprofessional considerations also influence relations among municipal-council members. Our interviews with the directors of municipal education departments show that most of these

officials obtained their positions through personal connections, that some are blatantly unfit for their tasks, and that two of them lack an academic degree. They also seem be function as the mayors' puppets and rubber stamps. Much is done behind their backs; mayors often refrain from consulting them and following their recommendations. The director of the education department in Bustan explains:

> Generally speaking, the mayor does not consult with me on educational matters in our town. . . . He makes his own decisions on many issues without consulting me, and the principal also sidesteps me and goes straight to the mayor. For example, when they wanted to acquire an electricity lab for the high school, I noticed that the purchasing procedure was flawed. I tried to intervene, find out what had happened, and halt the unsound procedure, but I was unable. Incidentally, everyone in the coalition knew what was going on, but nobody intervened.

The director of the education department in ein-Galil reported that he had a B.A. in education, but our inquiries revealed that he had no degree whatsoever. He had attended university for one year, failed in his coursework, and was expelled. He was given his appointment because his family, the third-largest in the village, had backed the incumbent mayor in the elections, and the appointment was part of the deal that his clan had made with the mayor's clan. He claimed that

> Not all of the education affairs in the village go through me. In many cases, the mayor himself decides what to do, winds things up with his people, and goes ahead without even telling me what he is doing. For example, last year we held a ceremony to hand out awards and diplomas at the high school. It was also a cultural and educational event, run and organized by the municipal authority, and I knew nothing about it. . . . I heard about it from all sorts of people only one week before it took place.

When asked to identify the main culprits in the sad state of education in general and that of the high school in particular, all the municipal officials interviewed cited either the Ministry of Education and the central-government establishment, the school staff (the teachers in particular), or the parents, who were said to be apathetic about their children. Some even blamed the students themselves, arguing that they lacked motivation. Not one mayor said, "I admit to some

responsibility for the deterioration of the high school." Instead, they all declared, "As the municipal authority, I give them everything they want but they are out of order."

What about the local municipal authority's responsibility for the education of its children? According to the mayors, their concern with the schools was purely material, like the provision of equipment. They absolved themselves of any responsibility for improving the system, which would begin by improving relations in the school and among staff members and end with a comprehensive local master plan for education. The mayor of al-Jabal expressed it thusly:

> As a municipal authority, I am required to meet only the material needs of schools, such as benches, blackboards, paper, and the like. It is not my duty to be their caretaker. In the educational sense. . . master plans for education are not part of my area of responsibility. For this, we have a Ministry of Education and other education authorities. They are responsible for educational investment in schools, among other things.

One reason the mayors absolve themselves of responsibility for long-term investment in education is that such investment does not show immediate results and visible advantages in the short term. An investment in students who have just entered high school may not yield perceptible results until years later, when these students take the matriculation exams. This is problematic from the point of view of a mayor who has to prove himself quickly as the elections approach.

Al-Zeitun provides a positive example of the role a municipal authority can play if it so desires. Here, the high school and the municipal council coexist in harmony even though the school does not belong to the council.[25] The council supports the school mainly in the moral sense but also provides some resources, such as water, exemption from municipal property tax, and funding of teaching positions. The council also obtained a plot of land on which the school may build an extension that it has planned. By the same token, the council has made no attempt to meddle in the school's internal affairs, such as hiring of teachers and student admissions. The mayor told us that

> Parents approached us and asked us to help them get their children into the school. . . . We rejected these approaches because the decision of whom to admit and whom to hire as a teacher belongs to the school only. . . .

It is important to add that here, unlike other localities, the remarks of the mayor and the school on the council-school relationship were largely consistent.

The conclusion one can adduce from the foregoing discussion is that, in the Arab sector, municipal authorities do not play a positive and effective role vis-...-vis the State high school under their jurisdiction. Moreover, it seems that the more independent of the municipal authority the school is, the greater the likelihood that it will do its job well.

CHAPTER 5: RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Asymmetry

The Ministry of Education holds overarching responsibility for the education system in Israel: it provides both material and human resources, sets educational goals, and designs curricula and in-service activities for teachers. The Ministry of Education is also responsible for hiring teachers. principals, and other teaching staff.

The most salient characteristic of the relations between the Education Ministry and the Arab schools is that they are between a majority and a minority. In this sense, this relationship is no different from the others between the state apparatus governed by a Jewish majority and the Arab community, which constitutes a minority. It is a relationship between the ruling majority, with its institutions and resources, and a weak and marginal minority, which receives whatever the majority deigns to grant it. Here we will not take up the overall problem of unequal resource allocation between the Jewish and Arab sectors, but rather focus on the potential for local influence, including that of parents and of the Arab leadership, on national decisions pertaining to education in the Arab sector.

In most of our interviews, the respondents spoke of the impotence of everyone involved in education at the local level: inspectors, Arab officials in the Ministry of Education, and even the director of Arab education. It was clear, for example, that the mayors whom we interviewed correlated the low level of education in the Arab sector with the unequal and unilateral policy of the Ministry of Education, which is based on the assumption that Israel has no reason to "make intellectuals out of the Arabs," as the mayor of Bustan expressed it. According to the mayor of al-Zeitun, policymakers in the central establishment seem to be afraid of an improvement in the Arabs' level of education, ". . . which might present them with a serious challenge that would make it harder for them to control us, as they have done successfully to date. . . ."

In the opinion of another respondent, a senior educator,

> It's true that things are better today, in comparison with past policies of the Ministry of Education concerning the Arab sector: some of the curricula have been revised, there are more in-service activities for teachers, more resources, more classrooms, and so on, especially in the past few years. But the guideline of the policy has remained intact. It is still centralized and unilateral. Everything is decided by dictatorial means, in which all Arab officials -- the supervisor of Arab education, the various inspectors, the divisional directors, school principals, and even the rank-and-file teacher -- are in the best case pawns manipulated by directives from above. They have no choice but to carry out the policy verbatim. They are given no freedom or even a small measure of interpretation in carrying it out. As the Arab proverb says, they simply have to tie up the donkey where its owner ordered.

The history teacher in ein-Galil mentioned the fears that stalk every Arab teacher -- particularly in the State education system, which is under the direct jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education -- at the beginning of their careers: "The teacher always has to prove that he's toeing the line and mustn't refer to current events in class or on the school premises."

According to one member of the high-school administration in Bustan, "Concerning the matter of the teacher's political affiliation, the Ministry's policy has changed slightly for the better, but we educators in the Arab sector still feel shackled and fettered. . . . Everything is handed down from on high, and all that's left for us to do is to follow orders." According to the history teacher in the al-Jabal high school, "The education system in the Arab sector reflects the attitude of the state and its authorities toward the Arab population, an attitude based on a majority that controls a subservient minority. . . ."

According to our interviewees, the system works in such a way that all decisions concerning Arab education are taken from above; Arab parents and leadership have no say. There are no Arab representatives at the highest echelons of the Ministry, and there is no Arab board of education that could function as an "Arab education ministry" akin to the "religious education ministry" embodied in the State-Religious Education Division, which is virtually autonomous in matters pertaining to religious education.[26] The Arab sector is very far from having educational autonomy or its own operational apparatus similar to that given to Orthodox Jews.

The respondents feel that the system is structured as a hierarchy with little influence rising from the base of the pyramid upwards. Because the system is strongly conservative,[27] one cannot expect any "revolutionary" changes; such changes as occur are mostly negligible and slow. Thus the antiquated paradigms that still characterize the Arab education system are preserved -- those that maintain the disparities within the Arab system itself (between private and State education) and those that deprive the Arab system of parity with Jewish education.

This description also applies to the way the district directors and inspectors, especially the inspector-general, go about their work. It transpires that they adhere meticulously and conservatively to government policy at the general level. At the individual level, their considerations are not always professional and they do not show any consideration for individuals, particularly with respect to the hiring and transfer of teachers. Our respondents habitually depicted the subject inspectors as "education wheeler-dealers," i.e., less concerned with education than with marketing textbooks they have written and "offering" them to teachers, without regular control of their professional or pedagogical quality.[28] A teacher in al-Jabal had the following to say on this issue:

> An education inspector in the Arab sector is so far removed from educational matters that he becomes a political-educational wheeler-dealer. . . . Although I have no definite proof, I am pretty sure, judging by my own experience, that most of the inspectors were appointed on the basis of party affiliations. . . . I am not claiming that none of them has suitable credentials, but the credentials that count are their party connections, not their college degrees. And today, in their official capacity, they work wonders in handing out appointments in exchange for benefits. . . . The inspector has simply become a powerful leader with resources in his society. . . . In the past few years, this position has taken on another component: the inspectors -- particularly subject inspectors -- have become "textbook factories," and this assures them additional income. They simply write textbooks in their subjects and force teachers to use them. Each year, they make several cosmetic changes in their books and reprint them in order to make more students buy them.

Hiring of Teachers

All the interviews illuminated the vast importance of the issue of appointments -- of teachers and other education staffers, inspectors, petty officials, and so on -- to the extent that it is perceived as the main factor in the backwardness of the Arab education system in Israel. We found that, to this day, security considerations affect the hiring of Arab teachers.[29] Moreover, political-party considerations play a role in teacher appointments, as do payoffs from the appointees.[30] The three mayors whom we interviewed alleged that the question of teacher appointments was the greatest blemish of the Arab education system, although they admitted that things had recently changed for the better. The mayor of Bustan expressed the general feeling:

> Since the establishment of the state, we have observed a grave behavior pattern on the part the Education Ministry and the security authorities: massive intervention in hiring of teachers in the Arab sector. . . . This is on top of personal and political considerations in preferring certain candidates over others who have no backing. This backing is usually provided by some political luminary or Arab political functionaries who are identified with the establishment, especially the ruling party and the Histadrut.

However, when the mayors spoke of themselves as employers and as the officials in charge of teacher appointments in high schools, they stressed that their considerations were purely professional. The most vehement in this matter were the mayors of Bustan and al-Jabal. The latter asserted, "I never paid any attention to coalition or election considerations in hiring high-school teachers in my village."

The teachers whom we interviewed, as well as other employees of municipal education systems, disagreed. They reported inappropriate appointments to the teaching staffs of their local high schools, sometimes involving academically unqualified candidates, for electoral, clan, religious-affiliation, or political reasons. What took place in al-Jabal, and in Bustan with respect to the school secretary, are only two particularly blatant examples. Unfit appointments have been made in other schools, too, if to judge by the remarks of teachers in these schools. One of the teachers in ein-Galil pointed out that "Politics between the two large clans in this town have

always figured in all aspects of local appointments, including the appointment of high-school teachers." Municipal education officials do not hide this fact, and the director of the department in Bustan actually justified it: "It is only natural that a mayor would seek to reward his supporters when he can do so." The director of the education department in Ein-Galil expressed the same point in slightly different terms: "No mayor is immune to such matters. . . . Where do you think you are -- Germany?"

The Follow-up Committee on Education in the Arab Sector

The Watchdog Committee on Education in the Arab Sector is a public committee set up about ten years ago by a group of intellectuals and public officials, with the support of political organizations active in the Arab sector, to promote Arab education and to lobby the authorities on the community's behalf.

The activity of this committee has been limited to holding annual conferences on education in the Arab sector; apart from this, its contribution as an agent of meaningful change has been negligible. Very few people, most of them intellectuals direclty involved in the committee, know what it does.

All of our respondents knew of the existence of the Follow-up Committee and even knew who headed it, but all believed that it was not doing enough to improve the state of education in the Arab sector. The principal in ein-Galil wondered if the committee still existed, but the mayor of Bustan said, "The Follow-up Committee is contentious and, at best, preoccupied with itself. It does nothing to help improve Arab education. . . ."

We heard no favorable opinions about the committee. The respondents referred to it as "one of the many 'castrated' entities that populate the Arab sector, which do nothing but talk and cannot create any real change," as a senior educator put it.

Although the committee does little to promote Arab education, at least insofar as one can perceive in the field, some of the respondents regarded it as a national body that confronts the Israeli authorities on educational issues as part of general struggle against discrimination of Arab

citizens of the state. For this reason, some educators still hesitate to identify with the committee, lest this prove detrimental to their status in the eyes of their employers at the Ministry of Education.

We cannot end this chapter without noting how our respondents perceived the role of public organizations and institutions in the Arab sector, including the Arab political parties, in education. The respondents' attitudes were purely negative; in their remarks, they attributed few accomplishments to these entities. It is true that most of these organizations, especially the political parties, concentrated on issues other than education -- primarily political issues that the leadership considered of paramount importance, such as the Palestinian problem. However, the mayor of Bustan did see fit to say that

> The general problem with the political parties that operate in the Arab sector is that their activists and leaders are not fit to be political leaders, even at the local level, because they do not have broad horizons and an inclusive strategy. They are extremely narrow-minded. . . . It is not surprising that they contribute nothing to the cause of improving Arab education.

CHAPTER 6: AN UNEQUAL OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

The school, in which the educational process unfolds, is affected by three players at three different levels: parents, the municipal authority -- responsible for the school at the local level -- and the Ministry of Education and the central-government establishment. These players leave their imprint on the three main actors in the school: administration, faculty, and students.

The opportunity structure in Israel's education system is unequal. At the countrywide level there is inequality of opportunities between students in the Jewish sector and their Arab counterparts. This inequality is also manifested at the local level; inequality of opportunities is the rule within the Arab sector itself, i.e., between private Arab schools and public schools, which include Arab state schools that belong to municipal authorities and the Ministry of Education. Another manifestation of unequal opportunity at the local level is the existence of two main scholastic "majors" or specializations in Arab state schools: one that enrolls a small number of students and leads to a good matriculation certificate, and another that serves most students and confers a graduation diploma at best. This disparity perpetuates itself on the basis of parents' socioeconomic status and level of education.

The disparity between the Arab and Jewish sectors, particularly the Ashkenazi sector, is vast. This is reflected rather clearly in the percentage of Arabs among university students in Israel. By the same token, an analysis of the various relationships underscores the gauntlet that Arab students must run from first grade until the matriculation exams. The last stage, that of high school, where students prepare and are screened for the matriculation exams, is especially problematic.

If we add to all these factors the systematic inequality, to the Arabs' disadvantage, in the allocation of education resources by the central establishment, we find that the lack of success of most Arab students in the education system, especially in gaining access to the academic majors that confer matriculation certificates worthy of the name, reflects the inferior status of the Arab

community in Israel. This record is clear evidence of the weak influence of Arabs in Israel on countrywide decision-making in matters concerning them, including education issues.

Summing up, the conditions under which the Arab education system operates at the countrywide level, particularly in secondary schooling, have the effect of preserving the disparity between Jews and Arabs, both in educational achievements and in socioeconomic status. The situation at the local level, i.e., disparities among Arab citizens themselves, is a function of the situation at the countrywide level and also complements it in the trend toward which it works. In other words, the way the disparity is maintained at the countrywide level affects the ways it is maintained at the local level. The intention of using specializations and tracking to exclude all but a minority in Israel from academic studies is perceptible not only on the countrywide level but also within the Arab sector itself in the distinction between private schools, which offer a successful path to mobility, and State schools, which serve the majority and facilitate mobility with much less success.

The opportunity structure that the Arab student faces is also unequal. Only a small proportion of students pursue a program of studies that leads to matriculation. Many drop out along the way; many others stay in school, but not on a path that leads to matriculation.[31] Scholastic success depends not only on students' personal abilities but also on the type of school they attend, the major they take, and, to a large extent, the expectations of educators in their locality, chiefly those in the school. These expectations are often based on ascriptive characteristics, such as the family's socioeconomic status, parents' education, and the family's political affiliations.

Two separate education systems coexist at the secondary level, differentiated mainly in the level of education they provide. The high school in al-Zeitun represents the superior system that confers better opportunities for success. It is a selective denominational high school,[32] one of five Arab high schools that are considered quality institutions, especially in terms of success in matriculation.[33] The principal, teachers, and staff of this school are particularly well trained, and the parent-teacher relationship here is good, open, and liberal.

Frontal teaching is the method of choice in this school, but with one large difference that the principal explains:

> We have to use this method, particularly in several subjects, or more precisely in many topics in several subjects, because we have no other suitable method. . . . [Examples of such subjects] are history and Arabic. But we try to be reasonably flexible and up to date, especially in laboratory subjects such as physics, chemistry, computers, and the like. . . .

More important, according to the principal, is that

> We try to encourage teachers to use more modern teaching methods and attempt to help them overcome the obstacle of traditionalism in teaching methods. As far as I'm concerned, they may use any method they wish in order to communicate the material properly. . . . I spare no expense, especially when it may help students advance.

This statement, corroborated by teachers in his school, shows that although constraints in several subjects make frontal teaching necessary, it is not the only method used in the school.

Relations between the school administration and the teachers are based on mutual trust. Parent-school relations are based on full cooperation, especially on the part of the parents' committee. Attempts are also made to prevent negative intervention by parents in school affairs such as grades, student admissions, and teacher-student disagreements.

Moreover, the school staff, including the principal, attempts to keep the school out of local issues, especially political conflicts, clan disputes, and the like, in order to safeguard its educational atmosphere.

The school is on good terms with the municipal authority. As stated, the municipal authority is not responsible for the school and makes no attempt to interfere in the school's internal affairs.

Finally, although the school is partially funded by the Ministry of Education, it maintains an administrative "autonomy" of sorts by accepting the Ministry's advice and recommendations but not its dictates.

It is the combination of these factors that gives the students of this school the opportunity structure that enables them to succeed. All students pursue academic specialties, and most manage to obtain a high-level matriculation certificate, a passport to university.

The vast majority of Arab students attend schools in the State system, in which the opportunity structure is inferior to that of the private system. In this system, a small proportion of students obtain matriculation certificates and only a negligible minority does so with particularly high average scores. The schools in the three other localities that we studied, al-Jabal, Bustan, and ein-Galil, fall into this category.

Frontal teaching prevails in these schools, and teacher-student interaction is authoritarian and hierarchical. Most teachers expect little of their students, and their judgments are based on the socioeconomic and intellectual standing of the students' parents.

Let us recall that at the al-Zeitun school, which has a socioeconomically heterogeneous student body -- some students affluent, others not -- the respondents spoke explicitly of how rare it was to find a correlation between expectations of a student and his or her socioeconomic or family background. The administration is very strict about this and entreaties teachers against making such a connection. Furthermore, this is a selective school, meaning that its students are known from the start to be high achievers. Finally, most of the teachers know nothing about their students' backgrounds because nearly all of them, and many of the students, come from out of town.

Our interviews with faculty members in the three other localities showed how clear it was to them that few of their students would manage to obtain a full matriculation certificate and that even fewer would do so with a particularly high average score. They attribute this

> above all to the students themselves, who are of poor quality and have little motivation to study. . . . and to their parents, who do not care about them.

However, they also implicate other players, such as the municipal authority and the Ministry of Education. In other words, the teachers consider these students' failure a foregone conclusion, i.e., they stigmatize the students and their parents.[34]

Furthermore, the teachers in these three schools are aware that some or all of them do not function properly, treat their work contemptuously, or lack the talent to carry out their duties. This emerged clearly when the teachers were asked, "What percentage of the teachers in your school would you dismiss?" The answers ranged from one-third to slightly more than half. Interestingly, the respondents described the teachers they would willingly dismiss in almost invariable terms: those with poor self-esteem, as manifested in their low level of education, their performance in the school, and their attitude toward students.

In the matter of relations between teachers and the school administration, respondents in all three localities reported a low level of cooperation and preferences based on non-professional considerations, which generated a sense of frustration among some of the teachers and prejudiced the quality of their performance and work.

Interaction between schools and municipal authorities was described as particularly problematic. The respondents reported a lack of cooperation and trust that was reflected in mutual recriminations, particularly on the part of the municipal leadership. ". . . We give them everything they need, but they are out of order, inept; they don't work as they should. . . ." There were also reports of rampant negative interference by the municipal authority, for considerations other than professional ones, in hiring of teachers, appointment of principals, resource allocation, award of in-school administrative functions, modification of grades, student admissions, and tracking of students by "majors."

As for relations between the Arab schools and the Ministry of Education, most of our respondents spoke of interaction between unequal forces of majority and minority. The Arab community is unable to influence decisions that affect its education system. All decisions, especially those pertaining to curricula and resources, are made "on high" and handed down through the mediation of inspectors and local officials. Inspectors intervene in matters such as hiring and transfer of teachers, frequently for reasons that are personal instead of purely professional.[35] That most local education officials in the Arab sector today are Arab does nothing to change the picture.

The foregoing leads us to conclude that the State education system in the Arab sector offers its students a low probability of taking and passing the matriculation examinations. In other words, the opportunity structure that it offers is less favorable than that of the private system, which, as stated, is selective. The State system admits only a small number of students to the course program that leads to university and leaves the majority by the wayside.

Conclusion

This study has attempted to explain the existence and perpetuation of the disparity between Jews and Arabs in scholastic achievements at the high-school level. It helps us understand why the percentage of Arab students who obtain matriculation certificates, especially at the level that facilitates access to university, is so low.

Our main conclusion is that the poor achievements of Arab students are the result of social and professional interaction among the various players in the education process, in school and in other settings, at the local level of community and municipal authority, and at the countrywide level, the Ministry of Education specifically and the government generally.

This conclusion is contrary to the conclusions of most studies undertaken so far, which have focused on inequality in allocation of educational resources to the Jewish and Arab sectors.

Many educators still believe that the scholastic weakness of most members of the Arab minority is rooted in cultural disadvantagement. In this case, the poor achievements of Arab students may be explained in cultural terms. Israeli Arabs, like Mizrahi Jews, are culturally marked[36] as having have less scholastic aptitude than their Ashkenazi Jewish counterparts. When this is said in the context of a competitive society based on the principle of equal opportunity, this is undoubtedly a rationalization customarily invoked to explain the disparity between the two sectors.

These justifications and attempted explanations are used not only by countrywide decision-makers but also by much of the local leadership and local players, including educators themselves. This was starkly evident in our interviews. Most Arab educators have very low expectations of

their students. Concurrently, the "institutional discrimination" explanation also serves the local players: most of our respondents complained of the disparity in educational-resource allocation between the two sectors.

In view of the foregoing, it transpires that the Arab leadership has, in effect, adopted the unequal strategy that guides the ruling establishment, in which high-school and university education is reserved for only some students -- in our case, only some Arab students. In other words, there is a tacit agreement between the central-government establishment and the local Arab leadership in the matter of those who are "worthy" and "unworthy" of higher education. This is reflected in the existence of two education systems in the Arab sector: private secondary and public (State) secondary. However, it is also manifested in the existence of a screening and tracking system, based on "majors," in the State high schools -- a system that leaves most such schools with only one matriculation class.

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[1]Office of the Spokesperson, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, *Results of Matriculation Examinations, 1993/94,* April 1995, unnumbered page.

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[5]Jiryis Sabri, *The Arabs in Israel,* New York, Monthly Review Press, 1976, and Lustik, Ian, *Arabs in a Jewish State* (in Hebrew), Mifras, Haifa, 1980.

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[14]Sharabi, Hisham, *The Patriarchal Structure of Arab Society* (in Arabic), Beirut, 1978.

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[17]Swirski, Shlomo, *Schooling for Inequality* (in Hebrew), Tel Aviv, Breirot, 1990, p. 206.

[18]An example is Dr. Muhammad Habib Allah, former chairman of the Follow-up Committee on Arab education, in *Ha'aretz*, November 3, 1994.

[19]Rosental, Robert, and Lenore Jacobson, *Pygmalion in the Classroom*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

[20]Ibid., p. 36.

[21]Hiring of teachers is discussed separately below.

[22]Mari` Sami, "School and Society in the Arab Village in Israel" (in Hebrew), *Studies in Education* (*'Iyyunim ba-hinukh*), No. 4, 1974, pp. 85-104.

[23]Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, 1994.

[24]The mayor of al-Jabal has held this office for more than twenty years.

[25]This may in fact explain the harmonious relationship.

[26]Swirski, 1990: 64.

[27]Mari`, Sami, *Arab Education in Israel*, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1978.

[28]Mari`, 1978.

[29]Al-Haj, M. *The Arab Teacher in Israel: Status, Questions and Expectations* (in Hebrew), Haifa, The Education Research Center, July 1995.

[30]*Ha'aretz*, November 28, 1994.

[31]Swirski, 1990: p. 204.

[32]Some students who do not manage to gain admission to this school, especially those who live in al-Zeitun (and they are few), never even advance to tenth grade, i.e., they drop out before high school. Others attend nearby vocational schools.

[33]*Al-Sinara* (newspaper), April 22, 1995.

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