

Separation, Inequality and Faltering Leadership

EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

Shlomo Swirski Noga Dagan-Buzaglo
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I. The dynamics of separation and inequality

Israel never developed a uniform, egalitarian public education system. In fact, the most outstanding characteristic of contemporary education in Israel is separation – on the basis of ethnicity, degree of religiosity, and class. This separation is not the product of a pluralistic, multi-cultural world view, but rather the result of long-standing political and economic arrangements, some created by mutual agreement and others imposed from above. Since the separation is anchored in economic and political power relationships, it is accompanied by a high degree of inequality.

Ideological and religious separation

Prior to 1948, the main feature of the education system set up by the Jewish community in Palestine, was separation based on ideological, class and religious affiliation. During this period, schools were divided into four subsystems or streams. The General stream was identified with the urban middle classes, and later also with the right-centrist political parties. In 1948, 50% of the student body attended these schools. Second in size was the Labor stream, under the control of the labor movement and attended by 25% of the total school population. The third variation was the Mizrahi stream, controlled by the party of the same name (which subsequently became the National Religious Party or NRP, today renamed The Jewish Home [Ha-Bayit HaYehudi] party). The smallest stream was run by Agudat Israel – an Orthodox political party (Bentwich, 1960: 72).

In 1953, five years after Israel's establishment, the then premier, David Ben-Gurion, attempted - with very limited success - to introduce a greater degree of state-level uniformity. The two major streams – General and Labor (which had in the interim exchanged places in numerical terms as a result of the Mapai Party's control of the new State's apparatuses, including those dealing with immigrant absorption) – merged and became what is referred to today as “state education,” secular in nature. Although the Mizrahi stream also became a state system, it maintained its separate religious nature under the “state-religious education” label. Lastly, the Agudat Israel stream preserved its independence (it was even called “independent education”)

while enjoying state financing, under the bureaucratic label of “recognized unofficial education.”

Separation is expressed also on the administrative level. Although all subsystems are officially subject to the Education Ministry, in practice the education minister primarily runs the state secular education system. The reason for this state of affairs is that state religious education is administered by a separate department in the Education Ministry, which functions like a “kingdom within a kingdom.” Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) education is also a “kingdom within a kingdom,” administered from outside the Education Ministry (In fact, today there are two ultra-Orthodox kingdoms: independent education, the heir to the Agudat Israel stream, and Ma'ayan HaHinuch HaTorani, founded by the Shas Party).

Ethnic separation – Palestinian Arabs and Jews

The Palestinians, who prior to 1948 constituted the majority of the country's population, attended a separate education system run by the British Mandate government. This ethnic separation continued to exist after 1948, primarily because the remaining Arab localities within Israeli territory were placed under military administration, which lasted until 1966. The abolition of military administration did not eliminate this division in education: with a few exceptions, almost all Arab students, boys and girls alike, are taught by Arab teachers, both male and female, at separate schools where the main language of instruction is Arabic and part of the syllabus is specific to Arabs. Officially, the Arab schools fall under the state education sector, but in practice they are administered by a separate department in the Education Ministry. However, unlike the Jewish state religious and ultra-Orthodox streams, which are run by representatives of these streams, the Arab education department does not enjoy independent Arab administration; for most of its history, it has been headed by Jews. To further complicate things, Arab schools are themselves divided into a number of sub-streams, such as Druze schools, whose syllabus differs slightly from that of the other Arab schools. In addition, as well as Arab state schools there

are also Arab non-state schools, known as “recognized unofficial education,” including church schools.

Ethnic separation – Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews

With the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, an additional ethnic line of demarcation was drawn, distinguishing between veteran settlers, most of them originating from Europe (Ashkenazi Jews), and new immigrants who came from Arab countries (Mizrahi Jews) during Israel’s early years. Most of the recent arrivals were sent to new settlements – rural moshavim (cooperative farming villages) and development towns – or to outlying (southern) neighborhoods in cities. Even when they lived side by side with veteran Israelis, new immigrant children were frequently sent to separate classes in schools attended by the children of veteran settlers. The result was that in 1952, some 85% of new immigrant children, mainly from Arab countries, were learning in educational frameworks that separated them from the children of long-time settlers (Swirski, 1990: 52).

In 1960, the ethnic demarcation on the elementary level was reproduced on the secondary education. This was the upshot of a government attempt to increase what up to then had been the very low percentage of Mizrahi students attending high school. The policy took the form of sending Mizrahi students en masse to vocational high schools. As a result, vocational education became, in practice, overwhelmingly the preserve of Mizrahi students. This sector was also organized separately. Not only were vocational schools mainly established in localities with large concentrations of Mizrahi populations, such as development towns, but almost all of them were run by non-governmental networks such as ORT and WIZO. The separation line dividing the academic track from its vocational counterpart was very clear in each of the Jewish streams: state secular, state religious and Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox. During this period the academic stream was primarily an Ashkenazi preserve.

The “market forces”

The Six Day War imparted a new dimension of separation. Previously, the dynamics of separation had been dictated by ideological, religious, and ethnic factors. Now they were increasingly influenced by class considerations. To use a current economic buzz word, since the 1970s, the main dynamic factor in the education system has been the “market forces”: in the case under consideration here, this referred to families of the middle and upper classes that emerged during the years of sustained economic growth following the establishment of the State and consolidated following the 1967 war. These families desired to acquire an education for their children befitting their new status, marking them off from the blue-collar workers, the Mizrahi immigrants and the Arabs. Initially they accomplished this by exploiting their connections within the State apparatus; subsequently they took advantage of their

growing economic power to assure their children's future.

The initial achievement of the “market forces” was an upgrading of secondary education through the 1968 educational reform. This reform involved a shift from the system of eight years of elementary school and four years of secondary school to a system of six years of elementary school, followed by three years of junior high and a further three years of high school. Teaching personnel in junior high schools were required to be college graduates, like their colleagues in the high schools. This requirement was introduced during a period when most teachers had at best graduated from teacher training colleges. Thus, the 1968 reform led to six years of preparation for university study, taught by a minority of the country’s best teachers. In addition, during these years most candidates for university study came from relatively affluent, veteran Ashkenazi families, and in this sense the reform may be viewed as an official step that brought about a privileged path for the children of the affluent, who were then trained for leadership, management, command and research positions.

Integration and anti-integration

The 1968 reform was accompanied by an integration scheme designed for Jewish education only, which intended to integrate Mizrahi students into the new junior high schools. However, this integration plan failed to eliminate or even blur the interethnic separation line. Firstly, only a minority of the Mizrahi students attending junior high schools – which were generally set up in conjunction with academic high schools – managed to continue on to the academic track in high school. Secondly, the proposed integration aroused fierce opposition from the affluent families in both the state and state religious education systems. By and large, their struggle against the integration scheme, waged by both legal and political means, was successful. In any case, the Ministry of Education did not sufficiently insist on the need to implement the scheme. (Swirski, 1990: Chap. 6; Gibton, 2003). These struggles, which continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, constituted another victory for “market forces.” By the beginning of the 1990s, just 46% of local authorities had implemented the reform and set up junior high schools; and only 56% of Jewish students and 46% of their Arab peers were studying at junior high schools (Gaziel, 1994).¹

Budget cutbacks

The result of anti-integration activism was public pressure to maintain ethnic separation within the education system. Such pressure soon acquired a new channel for its actions, in the wake of the 1985 emergency economic stabilization plan. The

1 It should be noted that research interest in integration issues, vibrant in the 1970s and 1980s, faded in the 1990s. The same happened to regulatory interest. The education system undertakes neither supervision nor systematic investigation as to what is happening at junior high schools in order to study the implementation of integration within schools (Barak Medina, April 2, 2003).

stabilization plan symbolized the victory in Israel of a neo-liberal socio-economic outlook that led to a radical change in Israeli public policy. This outlook replaced the previous perspective, according to which public policy should strive to achieve public welfare, involving across-the-board development of society as a whole in such areas as employment, housing, education and health. In contrast, the new approach made economic growth the key objective of government policy. Previously, the heads of the State had viewed themselves as leaders of the development effort; under the new approach, the reins of leadership were transferred to the business sector. Formerly, the State had controlled the resources making development possible; the new approach required the State to limit its role and exercise fiscal restraint, and in particular in regard to the national budget (Ben-Bassat, 1999).

For education, this new approach resulted in budgetary cutbacks and an abrupt halt to development and improvement of the education system. In practice, after 1985 the State desisted from introducing nationwide educational changes. Hence the last system-wide reform in the Israeli education system was that of 1968.

Grey education and registration areas

As a result of budgetary cutbacks, the quality of education was threatened at all levels of the system. In reaction, affluent families introduced an approach that paved the way to the input of private funds into the system: parental financing of the teaching hours that had been cut by the Ministry of Finance. This approach reflects a new, class-based separation line that has taken root in the education system. Not all parents were

able to supplement the cost of slashed teaching hours out of pocket.

Throughout the 1990s, class-based separation rapidly acquired a new organizational manifestation when the Ministry of Education opened registration areas and introduced limited school choice. Previously, parents were required to register their children for schools on the basis of residence, which was likely to include children from a variety of class backgrounds. However, the development of parental choice within registration areas marked the transition to a system that enabled children from well-off backgrounds to study together with their affluent counterparts, even if this meant going to school outside their area of residence. The contribution of parental funds and the opening of registration areas marked the hegemonic consolidation of “market forces” - in other words, of upper class families, in the education system.

Private entrepreneurship

The 1990s saw the advent of new forms of private funding and private initiatives, which tipped the balance even more in favor of schools in affluent neighborhoods and localities. Schools began to engage in independent fundraising, turning to parents, donors or the business community; renting out rooms for commercial activities to increase income; and charging tuition, even in the case of completely public schools that received most of their funding from State coffers.

Today, the most striking expression of the hegemony of “market forces” is the large number of new schools that have emerged from new initiatives undertaken by educational networks and groups of parents seeking to establish distinctive

The limits of the right to education: Education in East Jerusalem

In 1967, after Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem, the government wished to introduce the standard curriculum of Arab schools in Israel into the Palestinian schools in that part of the city. The Palestinian teachers objected, arguing, among other things, that the Israeli matriculation certificate would not enable their high school graduates to continue their studies at Arab universities. During the 1967-68 school year, schools in East Jerusalem went on strike, and during this period many students from public

schools transferred to private ones. Eventually, the Israeli government agreed to allow East Jerusalem schools to continue to use the Jordanian curriculum (Amirav, 2007: 270-271). In 1994, in the wake of the Oslo Accords, the Jordanian curriculum was replaced by that of the Palestinian Authority.

Despite the difference between the curricula, Israeli educational legislation, and in particular the Compulsory Education Law (1949), applies in full to the Palestinians in East Jerusalem. This has

been the case since they were recognized as permanent residents of Israel in 1967. Thus, Palestinian children residing in East Jerusalem are fully entitled to public education, which the State and the Jerusalem Municipality are obligated to provide. This right has also been recognized by the High Court (H.C. 5185/01, *Fahdi et al. vs. Jerusalem Municipality et al.*). The responsibility for providing education lies with the Jerusalem Education Authority (JEA).

However, in practice, for thousands of Palestinian children in East Jerusalem,

educational establishments for their children. In every respect these are State schools, since they receive most of their funding from the Ministry of Education; but in addition to State monies, they charge parents the equivalent of co-payments under a variety of names. These range from paying for an “additional study program” through what is known as “tuition.” While these additional payments are naturally used to finance a variety of activities, they simultaneously serve as a mechanism for excluding students from low-income families who are unable to afford them. Given this state of affairs, such schools should be more properly referred to as “separatist public schools.”

Research by the Institute for Entrepreneurship in Education, indicating that between 2000 and 2007, 125 different associations were involved in setting up schools, gives an idea of the scope of this development (Weinhaber, March 23, 2009).² According to researchers’ estimates, the proportion of separatist public schools (irrespective of whether they were set up as a result of private or public initiative) varies between a quarter and a third of all Israeli schools (Gibton, March 23, 2009; Blass, 2005).

Separatism as the assumption of State authority

We have seen how the separation that typifies the Israel education system is the upshot of arrangements stretching back many years, some to before the establishment of the State. At

² Many refer to the separatist schools as “private.” This is a misnomer, since these schools receive government funding. There are almost no genuinely private schools in Israel, those that are funded entirely by parental contributions. A plan was recently announced to set up such a school, at the initiative of the former principal of Tel Aviv’s Herzliya Gymnasium, Dror Aloni. According to the announcement, annual tuition for the school will be NIS 30,000 (www.havruta-school.org.il).

the same time, this phenomenon of separation reflects an active and ongoing dynamic that has increased in velocity over the last two decades, following the implementation of the emergency economic stabilization plan in 1985. The dynamic has been borne along by initiatives taken by strong class-based forces assuming powers that the law specifically ascribes to the Ministry of Education. We should emphasize that we are not referring to the fact of initiative shown by citizens, since the freedom to take civic initiatives is a basic component of the democratic political culture. Rather, we refer to the phenomenon of groups of citizens taking it upon themselves to erect separatist class, ethnic and religious walls within the public education system – a system that should be open to all. And this is being done without running the slightest risk of losing State recognition or government funding. As for the State, not only does it fail to defend its own objectives and authority: it positively promotes the divestment of its own authority, as we will see below.

The assumption of authority embodied in the activities of public separatist schools ultimately leads to exclusionary phenomena explicitly prohibited by the law: for example, the discrimination against Mizrahi students practiced by Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox schools; the discrimination against Ethiopian students practiced by all streams; the discrimination in all Jewish streams against Arab students and that of separatist schools against students from low-income families.

the right to education is currently only partially realized. The problems revolve around the enormous lack of classrooms in the public schools in this part of the city. In 2008, there was a shortfall of 1,000 classrooms in the public education system there. For 2011, the forecast is that the shortfall will shoot up to 1,500. Over a ten year period, between 1995 and 2005, the shortage of classrooms tripled (Vorgan, October 16, 2006; Ir Amim, 2007; 2009; State Comptroller, 2009 (I): 615-659).

The shortage of public education classrooms forces thousands of Palestinian children to apply to private or unofficial schools – run variously by churches, the Waqf, the United Nations or Palestinian institutions. Attending them costs money.

In 2008 there were some 90,000 students enrolled in East Jerusalem schools; less than half of them – 40,745 – were enrolled in the public education system, with the remainder attending private schools. Some 5,500 were not registered

in any educational setting whatsoever.

The overwhelming majority of high school students in East Jerusalem take the Palestinian version of matriculation examinations. A minority (mainly from Beit Safafa) take the Israeli matriculation examinations. In 2005, 229 students from East Jerusalem took the Israeli matriculation examinations, and 13.8% were awarded a diploma.

II. The Ministry of Education vs. “market forces”

Confronted by these extremely active market forces, all that the State – the body we expect to balance these market forces – has done is to simply provide ex post legitimacy to most of the separatist steps taken by the middle and upper classes, just as it failed to act vigorously to implement integration in junior high schools (Swirski, 1990:Chapter 6; Gibton, 2004). The state gave its retroactive approval to parental money poured into the system; it opened registration areas; and it encouraged a plethora of private initiatives. For over ten years, the State has also been working to decentralize its own powers by transferring them to schools, even though most of the latter are incapable of independently providing for their operations. Among the reasons for this state of affairs are difficulties in raising resources in addition to those schools receive from the Ministry of Education. It may be said, therefore, that the State’s control of the education system is becoming increasingly shaky, whether because “market forces” are arrogating its authority to themselves, or because the State itself is seeking to transfer its burden of authority to others.

This is a very acute and dramatic change, since in the first decades following Israel’s establishment in 1948, the State was extremely proactive in the field. The education system was perceived as a fundamental part of the Israeli nation-building project. Just four years saw the enactment of the two major pieces of educational legislation – the Compulsory Education Law (1949) and the State Education Law (1953). Ben-Zion Dinur, the country’s second minister of education, gave a comprehensive overview of the prevailing view of education during this period:

State education means that education is an area that belongs to the State, where the State is to play an active role, and for which the State is entirely responsible. State education does not simply mean increasing the State’s authority over education, or simply removing education from the sphere of social and [political] party controversy. State education means imposing the responsibility for education on the State – complete, undisputed and undivided responsibility... The State is completely and utterly responsible for directing, guiding and bringing about the development of the young generation. (Dinur, 1968:25)

In this spirit, the fledgling State was in the forefront of the process of assuring that the new arrivals – the Jews who came from all the ends of the earth and the Palestinians remaining within the Green Line – became part of Israel’s public education system. This required major efforts to construct facilities, train teachers and disseminate curricula.

The degree of importance then attached to education by the country’s leadership is indicated by the fact that the Ministry of Education was headed by key figures in the ruling party. In the first three decades of Israel’s existence, its ministers of education were Zalman Shazar, who subsequently became the country’s president; Zalman Aranne and Abba Eban, leading figures in the Mapai Party; and Yigal Alon, commander of the Palmach and later a Labor Party leader. In addition, Israel’s prime ministers were also highly involved in education. The major educational reform of 1968 came about as a result of cooperation between Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and Minister of Education Zalman Aranne.

The 1967 Six Day War and the protracted dispute over the territories occupied at the time by Israel changed the priorities of Israel’s governments. The outlook that had prevailed until then – that of a developmental state striving to foster economic and human resources – gave way to an approach that sought to make the country a regional power with a large army and an equally large defense budget, allied with “free market” economy considerations, resulting in a stunted role for the State and an aggrandized status for the private market.

In 1977, the Ministry of Education was placed in the hands of a junior coalition partner for the first time – the National Religious Party (NRP). From then and until 2001, the minister was from one of two junior coalition partners: the NRP and Meretz (apart from the six years during which the education minister was the Labor Party’s Yitzhak Navon, who subsequently became president of the State). It was not until 2001 that the ministry returned to the governing party, with the appointment of Likud’s Limor Livnat.

The whittling down of the education budget began in 1980; in 1985 it was slashed under the emergency program to stabi-

lize the budget. The education budget returned to growth during the absorption of large-scale immigration from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, but in per student terms it never returned to the level of the previous period.

We have already reviewed the role played by market forces in the education system since 1980: the entry of private funds into the system, and the opening of registration areas. Given the modus operandi of these forces, the State could have been expected to act as a counterweight as well as to defend, strengthen and upgrade public education. In practice, not only did the State fail to curb the tendencies toward inequality; it also provided retroactive approval to many of the initiatives of its affluent. How did this happen?

First of all, the status of the Ministry of Education's has eroded steadily since 1977. Like many of its counterparts, the ministry has lost its organizational ability to initiate, develop, institutionalize and enforce sweeping measures. In fact, since 1985, only two ministries have managed to retain or even enhance their status: the defense ministry, which enjoyed higher status prior to the Six Day War but subsequently gained in strength as a result of Israel's new self-appointed role as a regional military power; and the finance ministry, which was at the forefront of the switchover from a developmental state model to a free market model. After 1985, the finance ministry effectively assumed control of the management of most other ministry budgets, with the exception of the defense ministry, through the simple device of appointing finance ministry officials to the position of accountant general of each and every government ministry. Thus, in effect, the finance ministry controls not only the shaping of the education budget and the ministry's salary policy, but also the ministry's ability to actually put into practice reformist ideas advanced from time to time.

Secondly, in most of the "civilian" ministries, including the ministry of education, what were previously key areas of operation have been transferred to private hands, while other operations, such as inspection and enforcement, have lost much of their powers. Privatized areas include curriculum planning, the training of senior teaching personnel, a major portion of budgetary regulation activities, part of the education and wel-

fare department operations, proctoring matriculation examinations, supervising school outings and more. Bodies that previously operated from within the education ministry, such as the National Authority for Measurement & Evaluation in Education, now operate outside it. Today, major education ministry projects are run by non-governmental bodies, including the CRB (Karev) Foundation and the SACTA-Rashi Foundation. Local authorities now administer areas of activity previously run by the education ministry, in many cases through private providers, including school self-management systems in Jerusalem (René Cassin Foundation) and Tel Aviv (Yuval Chinuch Company). Whole areas of knowledge are currently run by private bodies, including online-environment services, nutrition programs, health education programs, and most enrichment studies. All of this is in keeping with the Ministry of Education's declared policy of transforming itself from an organization invested with State authority and powers to a mere operations ministry, devoid of control over content (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

The most dynamic forces in the education system are presently found outside, rather than inside, the Ministry of Education. The two most dynamic forces are, firstly, the affluent classes, which manage to take advantage of the State's retreat to set up separate, elitist schools (schools with enriched religious studies, sciences and arts schools, democratic schools – and the list goes on and on) for their own children. The affluent operate not only on the school level but also the national one, through such public bodies as the Dovrat Commission and Hakol Hinuch - the Movement for the Advancement of Education in Israel. These bodies are headed by business figures, and they advance reforms primarily aimed at organizational changes whose principal outcome is to strengthen the status of affluent local authorities and well-off schools.

A second dynamic force comprises the ultra-Orthodox political parties, whose education networks are growing due to both a high natural growth rate and the recruitment of low-income families, mainly of Mizrahi origin. The latter send their children to ultra-Orthodox schools both as a result of dwindling resources for state education and due to their inability to cope with an educational market controlled by market forces.

III. Education reforms and inequality

The fact that the Israeli education system is largely characterized by inequality is not a new discovery. In fact, the opposite is true: as long ago as the first half of the 1950s, research findings pointed in the same direction (e.g. see Smilansky, 1957). This inequality even aroused the fear among Israel's leadership that the Mizrahi Jews would undermine the legitimacy of its rule (see Zucker, 1985:200). When Abba Eban was appointed Minister of Education in 1960, he declared that "improving the level of the Mizrahim is the most important social challenge facing the education system" (Smilansky, 1957). However, research undertaken two decades later, in the late 1970s (Zucker, 1985:199), revealed that inequality continued to prevail, including among the generation of children born in Israel (see for example Bashi, Kahn and Davis, 1981).

In addition, reducing inequality was never made the center of a government reform program. In fact, quite the opposite: the major reform programs, irrespective of whether or not they were implemented, focused on organizational plans enhancing the advantages of students from affluent backgrounds.

We have seen that 1968 was marked by the introduction of the first (as well as the last) significant reform, primarily designed to extend the length of preparation for academic studies from four to six years (junior high + high school), taught by teachers with academic degrees. This reform encountered great opposition among the left-wing political parties and among left-wing circles in the governing party, Mapai, on the grounds that it would bring about a "serving elite" class in Israel. In reaction to this criticism, and out of a desire to obtain Knesset approval for the reform, its authors decided to add a new dimension – integration between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim within junior high schools (Levi-Faur, 1987). This reform did succeed in meeting the State's urgent need for an educated labor force, a need met, as indicated above, by high schools in affluent localities. However, interethnic integration was far less successful. Although the percentage of Mizrahim in high schools rose considerably during this period, this was not because they were admitted to the same schools as the children of the old-timers; rather, it was the result of the massive ex-

pansion of the vocational track, to which most Mizrahim were channeled (see Swirski, 1990: Ch. 4).

What is undeniable is that the issue of interethnic inequality led the Ministry of Education to introduce a large number of remedial programs, most of which were specifically designed for Mizrahi students (eventually most of these programs were consolidated under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education's social and welfare department). However, these programs did not manage to change the separatist structure of the education system, or the separation of students into diverse tracks; rather, they provided Mizrahi students with specific assistance, enabling some to make progress in the system. The golden era of these programs was in the 1970s and '80s; in the 1990s, most of their budgets were slashed (Swirski and Swirski, 2003).

In 2002, 34 years after the major reform, an opportunity arose for the first time for a new sweeping education system reform. This was when education minister Limor Livnat, a member of the ruling Likud party, appointed a "National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel" under businessman Shlomo Dovrat. The commission drew up a comprehensive document, most of whose recommendations were adopted by the government under Ariel Sharon. However, implementation of its recommendations involved a major budgetary expense – which was not approved by the government. As a result, most of the recommendations were never implemented.

The Dovrat Commission was aware of the depth of inequality in Israel's education system, and its recommendations contain at least one important proposal for tackling the problem – introducing a differential school budget, so that schools in low-income localities receive a larger budget than their counterparts in affluent localities. However, the commission did not consider tackling inequality to be a primary task. Instead, its most important recommendation involved the organizational sphere: to decentralize the administration of the system, shifting it from the Ministry of Education to the regional and local authorities. This recommendation is in keeping with the macro-economic policy followed in Israel since 1985: reducing the

State budget as much as possible, and, at the same time, getting the central government to shed responsibility and shift it to commercial, civil, or local authority bodies. The problem is that in a situation in which the education system is in any case discrete and decentralized, with the various local authorities differing from each other in terms of resources and capabilities, this recommendation was likely to further accentuate the existing inequality, as the low-income localities would find it difficult to compete with their affluent counterparts. In practice, tackling inequality requires a completely different approach to that recommended by the Dovrat Commission: increased, not reduced, State involvement.

“School autonomy”

The idea of decentralizing the education system had been advanced previously, in 1989, by Shimshon Shoshani, at the time director-general of the Ministry of Education. Shoshani suggested a “school autonomy” approach, with the Ministry of Education transferring responsibility to the schools for areas for which the ministry had previously been responsible, first and foremost administration of the school budget. The idea was taken from the business world, and primarily involved transforming a school into a “profit center” that pays for everything it does. However, autonomy makes sense as long as it can be put into practice. Unlike the business world, where the premise is that every autonomous unit has at least a fighting chance of making a profit, the Israeli education world is full of schools (and local authorities) that have no such chance. As if this were not enough, under the “school autonomy” approach, schools were allowed to raise funds over and beyond the budget they receive from the Ministry of Education, from sources not available to every school: donations, parental contributions, allocations by the local authority or using the school premises for commercial purposes – for example, renting out rooms for commercial activities after school hours, something possible in larger towns and cities that have more active business activities and hence more demand for rooms and buildings, but less possible in smaller, more remote localities which lack such demand. We should also add that in the administrative autonomy

outlook, school principals, who had previously been viewed as “head teachers,” became, against their will, business managers, whose time was mainly occupied by dealings with government bodies and officials, suppliers and donors, and the media. In other words, administrative autonomy shifts the work of school principals from pedagogy to management.

Although most of the Dovrat Commission’s recommendations were not implemented, Shoshani’s were. The practical translation of the “school autonomy” idea is “self-administration.” Implementation began in Jerusalem in the late 1990s. According to Ministry of Education figures, by 2004 a total of 673 schools had switched to self-administration (Ministry of Education site, “Self-administered localities”; the figure was most recently updated in 2005; see also State Comptroller, 2009b).

Registration areas

Another of Shoshani’s suggestions was to open registration areas. This suggestion was intended to increase the opportunities for children from affluent families to study at separatist schools. Yitzhak Navon, who served as education minister when Shoshani was the ministry’s director-general, rejected the suggestion on the grounds that its implementation would hamper social integration and equal rights in education. In response, Shoshani resigned his post, becoming head of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality Department of Education and Culture instead. In this setting he managed to implement his plan in the city. Some ten years later, in 2001, opening registration areas became policy nationwide. Under this policy, known as “controlled choice,” every local authority sets registration areas, and all students are supposed to choose between schools in the registration area to which they belong.³

Ostensibly, opening registration areas brings about a market situation where parents have “free” choice over schools. In practice, since the schools in different neighborhoods are not

3 Director-General’s Circular 2002 4(i). Division into registration areas and the numbers of students included in the plan known as “controlled choice of schools by students” varies from one local authority to another.

equal, competition is limited. And then, when large numbers of students compete for a limited number of places in the small number of well-thought of schools, the upshot is that these schools choose students (and not vice versa), admitting those students considered the best and leaving the rest for the other schools. In other words, the educational market generated as a result of opening registration areas is controlled by the strong. Hence the opening of registration areas institutionalizes or even increases inequality in the system.

Tellingly, the country's two major teachers' unions – the Israel Teachers Union (ITU) and the Secondary School Teachers Organization (SSTO) – were not involved in the Dovrat Commission, nor in what led up to the Shoshani program. Both unions protested against the finance and education ministries' intention (while Limor Livnat was education minister) to introduce reforms in education unilaterally, without teacher involvement. The reason for the unilateral approach by the finance and education ministries is all too clear: both the Shoshani program and the Dovrat Commission's recommendations called for the decentralization of the education system and the adoption of a business management model involving "flexibility" in the employment of teachers, adversely affecting the current employment structure and the power of the teachers' professional unions.

The teachers' organizations proposed their own reforms: the SSTO's *Oz Letmura* ("Courage to Change") plan, and the ITU's *Tsa'ad Hakovea* ("Decisive Step"). These plans proposed extending teachers' working weeks, with all of their work being done in the school setting; changing teachers' remuneration and promotion structures; reducing the number of students per class, and reinstating the education budgets that had been slashed – all of this while maintaining education's public-state structure. While the Shoshani plan and the Dovrat Commission's recommendations were based on a transfer of powers to the schools, which were to become economic units run by "jack-of-all-trades" principals, the teachers' unions based their recommendations on improving the status and working conditions of teachers as a key means of improving education.

The phenomenon of organizational reforms based on views taken from the business world is not unique to Israel. Similarly, the phenomenon of business elites shaping educational reforms without involving teachers is not unique to Israel. Larry Cuban, an American education researcher who conducted a comparative analysis of educational reforms in various countries, found that devolving responsibility from an education ministry to local authorities and schools did not give rise to any significant results in the education sphere proper. It had practically no effect on a school's functioning, instruction and study, nor did it affect graduates' success on the labor market. According to Cuban, the main result of all such reforms is an adverse effect on teachers' conditions of employment (Ariav and Kfir, 2008:342-343). Cuban concludes that conditions for successful educational reform include the existence of a strong political leadership, public support, and sufficient financing, and, most importantly, support on the part of teachers (Ariav and Kfir, 2008:342-343).

Educational streams in Israel today

At the time of writing (2009) there are six school subsystems in Israel:

1. Secular Jewish state education subsystem;
2. Religious Jewish state education system, identified with the NRP (currently Habayit Hayehudi); Ultra-Orthodox Jewish state education system, currently split into two:
3. Independent education subsystem, identified with the Agudat Israel and Degel Hatorah political parties;
4. Ma'ayan Hahinuch Hatorani subsystem, identified with the Shas party
5. Arab education subsystem, comprising a number of additional divisions: for example, the Druze schools, with a slightly different curriculum from that of the Christian or Muslim schools.
6. July 2008 saw the approval of a new subsystem known as "combined state education," which seeks to build a bridge between Jewish state secular and Jewish state religious education.⁴

Each of these subsystems (apart from the latter) is in turn split along class and ethnic lines. The most salient expression of this is the existence, in each subsystem, of separatist public schools initiated by sectoral elites. In the case of the state secular subsystem, examples include establishments such as schools for the arts and sciences, democratic, anthroposophical schools, and the like; in state religious education, with examples such as the Noam or TALI school networks (involving enriched Jewish studies). All of these are on the elementary school level.

On the high school level, there is an older distinction between academic and vocational schools. In the state secular subsystem, the prestigious academic schools are to be found in affluent neighborhoods; in state religious education, their counterparts are prestigious yeshiva high schools; the same also applies to ultra-Orthodox education. In the Arab education system, most of whose students are Muslims, the prestigious schools are mainly Church-run

⁴ The establishments in this subsystem provide enhanced Jewish studies and emphasize Jewish identity in the framework of the regular Ministry of Education curricula. In 2008 it was stipulated that eight establishments would operate in the framework of this stream in 2009 (Amendment 10 2008 to the State Education Law 1953, dated July 2008).

and attended by the sons and daughters of families able to afford high tuition fees – Christian and Muslim alike.

The other side of the picture comprises vocational schools, which operate within each subsystem. The key characteristic of such schools is that they are not directly run by the Ministry of Education, nor by the local authorities, but by non-government networks, the largest of which is ORT, a Jewish international vocational educational organization; Amal, founded by the Histadrut, Israel's General Labor Federation; Amit, affiliated with the state-religious stream; WIZO, founded by Zionist women from the United States; and Atid, a private network of science and technology schools.

Over the years the relative weights of the different subsystems have varied. The most striking change is the shrinking of Jewish state education (both secular and religious) and the growth of the ultra-Orthodox and Arab subsystems.

In 1970, students at Jewish state (secular and religious) elementary schools made up nearly 80% of the total elementary school student body. The same year, 76% of all first graders attended state schools.

Some four decades later, in 2008, students at Jewish state (secular and religious) elementary schools made up 52.8% of the total elementary school student body, with 53.4 % of all first graders attending state schools.

In contrast, between 1970 and 2008, the proportion of elementary school students attending ultra-Orthodox schools rose from 5.4% to 19.4%, with the figure for first-graders increasing from 5.0% to 17.3%.

While the proportion of those in the ultra-Orthodox elementary education subsystem increased almost fourfold, the figure for those at Arab elementary schools went up by a factor of 1.5: from 18.5% in 1970 to 27.9% in 2008. Among first graders, the proportion of students in the Arab education subsystem increased

Table 1
School Population
1969/70-2007/08, By Stream and Type of School

Elementary School Students					
Year	Total	% of Total in Jewish Secular State Schools	% of Total in Jewish Religious State Schools	% of Total in Jewish Orthodox Schools	% of Total in Arab Schools
1969/70	460,983	53.4%	22.6%	5.4%	18.5%
1979/80	546,158	57.6%	15.6%	4.4%	22.3%
1989/90	601,390	54.6%	16.4%	5.8%	23.2%
1999/00	731,198	45.4%	14.4%	15.3%	24.8%
2004/05	778,278	40.7%	13.7%	18.2%	27.3%
2006/07	820,275	39.2%	13.6%	19.0%	28.2%
2007/08	841,417	39.2%	13.6%	19.4%	27.9%
First Grade Students					
1969/70	59,697	55.0%	21.0%	5.0%	19.0%
1979/80	84,429	59.0%	14.7%	3.8%	22.4%
1989/90	90,459	55.2%	17.1%	4.9%	22.8%
1999/00	113,571	45.1%	14.6%	14.4%	25.9%
2004/05	124,869	41.6%	14.0%	16.3%	28.1%
2006/07	134,193	40.1%	13.8%	16.9%	29.1%
2007/08	129,857	40.0%	13.4%	17.3%	29.3%
Junior High and High School Students					
1969/70	145,386	69.6%	21.5%	3.3%	5.5%
1979/80	253,878	63.5%	19.2%	2.7%	14.7%
1989/90	394,563	64.9%	14.5%	3.1%	17.4%
1999/00	562,152	60.8%	14.7%	7.2%	17.3%
2004/05	599,765	55.1%	14.0%	8.9%	22.0%
2006/07	604,116	53.1%	13.9%	9.6%	23.4%
2007/08	607,241	52.7%	14.0%	9.5%	23.8%

Notes: Figures include schoolchildren in East Jerusalem.

Totals include Arab children in non-recognized schools.

Source: Adva analysis of Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, various years.

by a factor of 1.5, from 19% in 1970 to 27.9% in 2008.

In secondary education, the decrease in the proportion of Jewish state schools attended by students is somewhat less dramatic, dropping from 91% in 1970 to 67% in 2008, while the figures for the ultra-Orthodox sector increased from 3.3% to 9.5%. It would seem that many families who register their children for elementary schools in the ultra-Orthodox sector transfer them to state system schools at high school age.

Similar growth has also taken place within the Arab high school sector, which increased from 14.7% in 1980 to 24% in

2008. Admittedly, if 1970 is chosen as the comparison point, the increase is far more dramatic, shooting up from 5.5% to 24%. This primarily reflects the fact that in 1970 Arab teenagers had a very low school attendance rate. A major rise began in 1970 as a result of the Ministry of Education's large-scale investment during that decade to increase Arab high school attendance. This was the upshot of the 1968 reform and subsequent expansion of the vocational school network in the seventies. After 1980, the Arab growth rate for high school education slowed down (CBS, *Israel Statistical Yearbook*, various years).

IV. The curriculum: Who is learning what?

The most important practical upshot of the separation into subsystems, tracks and specialized public schools is that in practice the students studying in each variation receive different curricula, and, accordingly, show different achievements.

Assuming that the achievement of standard progress by students at different stages in schooling depends on their coming to grips with set areas of knowledge, then to the extent that differences exist between different schools, or between different tracks within a given school, differences in the richness of a curriculum and the extent to which it is covered, these differences will obstruct the path to standard progress.

Unfortunately, the question of “who is learning what” is not a key topic in educational research. True, there is a wealth of statistical data about student achievements for the various subsystems (see below), as well as for different localities and schools, but there are very few comparative statistics about the differences between schools and students with regard to what is studied – differences which, it may be reasonably assumed, explain at least some of the variances in achievements. Neither does the Ministry of Education devote any special attention to this issue. Recently Israel’s State Comptroller found that the Ministry does not have a systematic mechanism for collecting data about the teaching of the various school subjects, since the inspectors’ role was defined 20 years ago and has not since been adjusted to take account of changing realities, and the committees on different areas of learning do not meet regularly. The result is that some two thirds of subjects are not taught as required, whether in terms of class hours, complete coverage of the subjects, or training educators to teach them. The comptroller also found that the Ministry of Education fails to adopt sanctions vis-à-vis schools not teaching subjects properly (State Comptroller, 2009 (I):773-869).

A well-known expression of inequality in terms of the material studied is the division of students in each class into ability groupings, each of which teaches the curriculum at a different pace. The upshot is that students in the top grouping learn more of the curriculum than their peers in the lower groupings. The

result is major differences in progress relative to the standard learning pattern. In Israel, the division of students into ability groupings dates back to the sixties. Not until 1990 did the Ministry of Education recommend that this not be done for elementary schools, but only from junior high on (Education Ministry Director-General’s circular 54/8, March 3, 1994). Studies undertaken in Israel and abroad have found that separation into ability groupings, rather than being a means of helping slower students make better progress, establishes a permanent division, with the different groupings studying different material (e.g. see Doron and Milin, 1979). Other studies have shown that ability groupings fail to help improve school achievements, but rather increase inequality in achievement (Gamoran, 1992; Wheelock, 1992). Notably, the OECD explicitly recommends that students not be divided into homogeneous groups, particularly in the early stages of education (OECD, 2009:80).

Comparisons between schools, and not just between groups in each school, also reveal a picture of inequality regarding the material studied. In 1981, a team of researchers studied the scholastic achievements of elementary school students in Israel (Bashi, Kahn and Davis, 1981). The researchers identified the extent of progress for various students in the regular curriculum. Thus, for example, they were able to show that for certain arithmetical operations, the achievements of Arab and Mizrahi sixth graders were the equivalent of those of Ashkenazi fourth graders (Bashi, Kahn and Davis, 1981:458).

More up-to-date research, examining the junior high school curriculum in Israel, identified a gap between the official curriculum and what was actually taught, as well as variations between schools in terms of curricula structure, subjects taught and the time spent on each subject (Rash and Benavot, 2004).

In high schools, about one third of the student body is enrolled in the vocational track, and two-thirds in the academic track (CBS, Israel Statistical Yearbook 2008, Table 8.10). Figures for 1992 show that at vocational schools, fewer class hours were devoted to mathematics (3.6 weekly hours at voca-

tional schools compared with 5 at academic ones), sciences (3 compared with 4.5), a foreign language (3 compared with 4.4) and Hebrew (2.1 compared with 4). In contrast, the number of weekly hours spent on technology and computers (23) was far greater than in the academic track (3.6) (Rash and Benavot, 2004:Table 2).

Again during high school, there are differences between and within schools regarding study levels for subjects examined at matriculation level. Each examination subject is divided into five units, and all students can choose the number of units in which they wish to be examined. The number of units indicates the extent of the material studied. The larger the number of units taken, particularly in mathematics, English and Hebrew, the greater the chances of being admitted to college generally, and to prestigious institutions specifically. The academic level for each subject in which high school students are examined is demonstrated by the matriculation results statistics, published annually by the Ministry of Education. In 2008, for example, just 18.6% of those examined in mathematics sat for all five units; 30% were examined in four units, and 51.4% in three units (the lowest level). In English, the equivalent figures were as follows: 40.5% – five units, 36.9% – four units, and 22.6% three units (Ministry of Education, 2009 (I)). Idit Livne studied the situation only among academic track students and found that here, too, there are three internal subtracks, which she categorized according to groups of academic subjects and the number of academic units. She called the three subtracks “regular matriculation,” “university matriculation” and “elite matriculation” – names indicative of their unequal caliber (Livne, 2006).

Core curriculum

Although the inequality over the material studied fails to arouse public or political interest, the “core curriculum” issue ignites considerable interest, particularly because it relates to political confrontation between the ultra-Orthodox and secular political parties. At its center lies the fact that ultra-Orthodox schools follow their own independent curriculum, rather than

the Ministry of Education’s basic one.

At the height of this confrontation, the secular-liberal Shinui party called for the granting of government funding to ultra-Orthodox educational institutions to be made conditional on their complete implementation of the basic curriculum (High Court 9751/99). Subsequently the Director-General of the Ministry of Education defined the number of hours to be devoted to each academic subject in elementary schools.⁵

In 2003 the Ministry of Education defined the basic subjects comprising the “core curriculum” and laid down a relationship between the extent to which this curriculum was implemented and the level of government funding of the educational establishment in question (Director-General’s circulars 2003/10(i) and 2003/10(iii), June 1, 2003). In 2007 the Ministry of Education went one step further by publishing a mandatory core curriculum for civics – but only for the formal classes given at elementary schools in the state secular and state religious systems (Director-General’s circular 2007/3(i), November 1, 2007). In 2002, the Ministry of Education was given a target date – the 2007-2008 school year – for drawing up a basic elementary school curriculum. This step came about following another High Court petition filed by the Secondary School Teachers Organization (SSTO) (H.C. 10296/02). Subsequently, in 2007 the Ministry of Education did in fact publish a core curriculum for secondary education, defining the number of study hours required for the various subjects, together with pedagogical principles and key themes (Director-General’s circular 2007/3(i), November 1, 2007).

The ultra-Orthodox political parties reacted with their own measures. On the one hand, there were persons who were prepared to give up part of their government funding in order to obtain an exemption from the core curriculum. On the other hand, the ultra-Orthodox political parties had no intention of foregoing any resources; they fought for their part of the educational budget, by attempting to circumvent the High Court’s

5 Director-General’s Circular 2000/7, March 2000.

decision. For example, in 2008 the Shas party managed to get the Knesset to pass a law granting an exemption to the core studies requirement for small ultra-Orthodox yeshivas defined as “special cultural educational establishments” and budgeted at a rate of 60% of the funding of academic secondary state schools. Without this law, funding for the small yeshivas, numbering some 260, would have ended in the 2008-2009 school year (Special Cultural Educational Establishments – 2008 Law). Previously, in 2007, Shas party parliamentarians were responsible for legislation requiring local authorities to fund unofficial recognized educational establishments, including most of the ultra-Orthodox educational establishments, at a level of 75% of the state school budget – entirely unrelated to implementation of the obligatory core curriculum (Amendment to Section 11 of the State Education Law – 1953, known as the Nahari Law).

The source of the above confrontation is a failure to agree on the definition of a core curriculum. The narrow definition comprises only the study of languages, mathematics and sciences. The broader definition includes a “broad common denominator derived from the fact that Israel is a Jewish and democratic state and comprising humanist, universal values such as human rights, active citizenship, or the right to self-expression of opinions and lifestyles” (Dovrat, 2005:13-14; on the difference between the two definitions, see Markman-Sternberg, 2009). The ultra-Orthodox are primarily opposed to the broader definition, and it may reasonably be assumed that if the demand was that they follow the narrower version, their opposition would lessen. In practice, many ultra-Orthodox educational establishments do in fact follow the Ministry of Education’s basic curriculum. This is the case, for example, for Ma’ayan Hahinuch Hatorani and most of the schools for girls in the two ultra-Orthodox subsystems (see the Ministry of Education’s response in H.C. 10296/02).

Comprehensive change requires agreement on the national

political level. It should be remembered that the autonomy of ultra-Orthodox schools is anchored in historic agreements between the ultra-Orthodox political parties and the Zionist Movement. One of them dates back to 1920, when the Zionist Federation first began funding schools in Eretz Israel, or Mandatory Palestine as it was then. The second dates from 1947, on the eve of the debates about the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states. In both cases, the Zionist leadership agreed to compromise and allow the ultra-Orthodox schools to enjoy educational autonomy when it came to educational funding, because the former needed the latter’s support in order to put the Zionist project into practice. In 1920, the Zionists represented a minority within the Jewish people, and they needed broad-based public support to fulfill the promise contained in the Balfour Declaration. In 1947, the Zionists needed the support of the ultra-Orthodox movements for the Partition Plan.

The notion of a “core curriculum” also impacts on the curriculum taught in Israel’s Arab schools. Many Jewish spokespersons acknowledge that the Arab school curriculum should contain “an expression of the separate Arab heritage” (e.g. see Dovrat, 2005:35). At the same time, however, they demand of Arab teachers and students “complete loyalty to the State of Israel” (Dovrat, 2005:35). Such a demand can be seen as commonplace - as the conduct expected of every single one of the country’s citizens and residents, but generally speaking the demand is made only of Israel’s Arab citizens.

Here, too, as in the ultra-Orthodox/secular split, we have an issue that needs to be solved on the national level. Logically, as long as the confrontation between the two peoples continues, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to come to grips with this issue. The practical question is whether, in the interim, the issue of “complete loyalty to the State of Israel” justifies a policy of exclusion and inequality between Jews and Arabs in the educational sphere.

On the pressure to re-extend vocational education

Recently proposals have been advanced calling for the rehabilitation of the vocational track. The background is a decline in the percentage of students enrolled in this track: from around 50% of the secondary school student body in 1980 to 37% in 2000. The proposals have largely been advanced by employers:

1. The Craft and Small Industry Association, which claims that industry lacks 5,000 technicians.
2. Industrialist Stef Wertheimer, asserting (in 2008) that only some 10% of high school students are studying in the vocational track, and that the so-called “technological” tracks are in fact academic in nature and do not train young people for industry.
3. The IDF, which asserts that because of the shortage of high school graduates with technological backgrounds, it needs to train 35%-50% of the graduates of academic tracks during their army service (Vorgan and Natan, July 13, 2008:29-32).

As a consequence, the Ministry of Education, Prime Minister’s Office and figures from the worlds of academe and industry are currently running a program to promote technological and vocational education: The Technicians and Matriculation Project was piloted in 2007, with 1,200 students participating.

In Israel, vocational education became

a key track in 1965, when the government decided to expand the vocational school network, to both meet the needs of industry – then a large economic sector – and also open the gates of high school education to Mizrahi youth in poor urban neighborhoods and development towns, who until then had been woefully underrepresented in high schools. Within a decade most Mizrahi youth were attending high schools, largely through enrollment in the vocational track.

The two-track system is not unique to Israel: A separate vocational track exists in most countries, reflecting a historical policy of class-based separation between those intended for executive, command and research roles, and those designated for vocational employment in industry. In some countries, such as Germany, this division has existed for many generations. It involves a certification and accreditation system, which enjoys the approval of the government, employers and trade unions. As a result, in Germany, vocational track graduates enjoy guaranteed professional status, can advance in their trade, have opportunities to attend advanced training courses, and are properly remunerated. In contrast, the Israeli vocational track has generally been viewed as a last-resort option for those unsuited to the academic track. As a result, there is no equivalent in Israel to Germany’s arrangements for vocational

track students and graduates.

The vocational track has been greatly criticized, primarily because for many years it was primarily a track for Mizrahi students (in the 1990s vocational tracks were also opened in Arab localities). As a result of such criticism, changes have been made, with the upgrading of academic disciplines and greater exposure to hi-tech subjects within the vocational track. In addition, as part of the effort to improve the poor image of the track, it has been renamed the “technological” track.

Today, 37% of high school students study in the technological track (not 10% as claimed by industrialist Stef Wertheimer). Against this background, the question is why its graduates are not able to satisfy the industrialists, given the fact that industry today employs just 16% of Israel’s workforce, instead of 25% as in 1970.

There is also a second, more fundamental point: what is the ethical and social justification for locking in youth at a young age to a study track in which their chances of studying in an academic framework and their chances of advancement are relatively low, and in which they are relegated to a path offering low prospects for advancement and decent remuneration.

V. Inequality in achievements

The most striking expression of class, ethnic and religious inequality and separation is in the enormous differences in the achievements of Israel's school children.

There are two ways of measuring school achievements: One is to measure students' success in completing their official course of studies: persevering in school (not dropping out), graduating from one class to the next in elementary school, moving from elementary school to junior high, and from junior high to high school (with the move to academic high school being considered as a greater achievement than the move to vocational high school), studying for the matriculation examinations (with students being allocated to levels according to the number of units they take in the various subjects), the extent of their matriculation examination success (level of examination difficulty [number of units] and grades); meeting higher education admissions criteria; and subsequent studies at institutions of higher learning (a distinction also being made on the basis of level and/or prestige of the various colleges and universities).

A second way of measuring achievements is to grade students on a comparative basis, both nationally and internationally. Below we give the achievements of Israeli students from the various subsystems using five indices: success rates in matriculation examinations and success rates according to the "effectiveness and growth" measures scale (in Israel), as well as the international PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA datasets.

Matriculation diploma entitlement rates

The most frequent index used to characterize inequality between different population groups in Israel is the eligibility rate for a matriculation diploma.

In each of the two previous decades, eligibility rates for a matriculation diploma went up by ten percentage points: from 20% in the age group in 1980 to 30% in 1990 and 40% in 2000. This decade, it seemed the eligibility rate would continue to increase at the same rate, after reaching 49.2% as early as 2004.

However, it then began to drop, so that by 2008 it had fallen to 44.4%. With hindsight it becomes clear that part of the growth recorded from the mid-1990s on was a result of changes introduced to make things easier for examinees and which varied from one year to the next – beginning with a lottery system to determine in which subjects students were to be examined, through the possibility of dividing up the subject matter and testing students on its different parts on separate occasions. It also turns out that the result of making things easier in this way was to reinforce the division between a matriculation diploma that grants admission to institutions of higher learning and one that does not (Ayalon and Shavit, 2004).

Table 2 opposite shows the eligibility rates for matriculation diplomas by subsystem and study track. The table starts by identifying the gaps based on class and ethnicity. In 2008, young people in affluent localities⁶ had the highest eligibility rate (in their age group) – 67%; in other words, in these localities, two out of three youngsters received a matriculation diploma. In development towns, this rate was significantly lower, at 46.9%; in other words, one out of two youngsters received a matriculation diploma. The lowest entitlement rate was in Arab localities, where just one out of three youngsters earned a matriculation diploma.

The table also shows statistics regarding eligibility rates in the different Jewish subsystems. In this case, the data indicate entitlement rates among 12th grade students, rather than eligibility rates for the age group. The reason is the absence of statistics about the size of the age group for the relevant sub-groups. The eligibility rates in the two state subsystems were fairly similar: 62.7% in the state religious and 62.9% in the state secular. The lowest eligibility rate – 21.7% – was recorded in the ultra-Orthodox stream. The table also shows that the percentage of 12th graders from the ultra-Orthodox streams who sat for the matriculation examinations was rather low: around half of their

⁶ Localities contained in CBS clusters 8-10 in 2003 and whose population is above 10,000 residents: Even Yehuda, Givat Shmuel, Givatayim, Ganei Tikva, Hod Hasharon, Herzliya, Kochav Yair, Kfar Saba, Mevaseret Zion, Modiin-Macabim-Reut, Kiryat Ono, Kiryat Tivon, Ramat Gan, Ramat Hasharon, Raanana, Tel Aviv-Jaffa.

Table 2

Percentage Passing Matriculation Examinations – 2008

	Percentage of Seniors Sitting for Exams	Percentage of Seniors Passing Exams	Percentage of Age Cohort Passing Exams	Percentage of Seniors Passing Exams at Level Required for Higher Education
Students passing exams			44.4%	86.8%
Seniors from affluent localities			67.1%	
Jews, not including Orthodox students			61.3%	
Jews, including Orthodox students			50.5%	
Seniors from development towns			46.9%	
Druze seniors	95.6%	46.8%	39.5%	74.1%
Arab seniors, not including those from East Jerusalem	93.0%	41.1%	32.4%	81.4%
Bedouin seniors from the Negev	86.9%	36.7%	26.6%	67.3%
Seniors in secular state schools	93.4%	62.9%		90.1%
Seniors in academic stream	92.4%	60.8%		87.8%
Seniors in religious state schools	93.9%	62.7%		85.6%
Seniors in vocational stream	88.3%	48.0%		84.8%
Seniors in Orthodox (Haredi) stream	52.2%	21.7%		

Note: The age cohort includes 5,241 Arab seniors in East Jerusalem and 15,279 seniors in Haredi schools not sitting for the exams.

Sources: Ministry of Education, *Figures on the 2008 Matriculation Examinations*, August 2009; Adva Center, *Students Passing the Matriculation Examinations, by Locality, 2007-2008*.

students, compared with over 90% in the state streams. This is indicative of the relatively low importance attached to a matriculation diploma in the ultra-Orthodox communities.

Finally, the table shows data for eligibility rates in the two high school tracks – academic and technological. In the academic track, the eligibility rate was 60.8%, compared with 48% in the technological one. The table below also highlights the marked difference between the rates of those who sit for the examinations and those who pass them, particularly in Arab and ultra-Orthodox schools, as well as in the technological track.

I. Comparative international tests

1. PIRLS (see Table 6)

The first international comparative test in which Israeli students are involved is the PIRLS – Progress in International Reading Literacy Study. This is carried out at elementary schools in fourth grade, in other words at the age of 10. The test is administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The test was last run in 2006, with 45 countries and regions participating. In Israel, the sample did not include students in special education

or students in the ultra-Orthodox schools. A total of 3,908 students and 149 schools in Israel took part in this test.

The results show that in the two Jewish state subsystems – religious and secular – there are students who achieved results placing them at the top of the table of averages for the participating countries, together with Russia, Hong Kong, Canada and Singapore (the tables below show the average grade for every country: it may be assumed that in each of these countries, there were even higher achievements). The students in question are from affluent Jewish families. In contrast, among Jewish students from families with a lower socio-economic rating, achievements are lower. Nevertheless, the achievements of all the Jewish students together are still above the average for the 45 countries and regions together.

On the other hand, the average achievement for Arab students in Israel is lower than the average for the aggregate countries and regions, and is significantly lower than the average achievement for Jewish students as a whole in Israel. In fact, their achievements place them at the bottom of the table, below the general average of the countries that took part in the test and side by side with Muslim countries such as Iran and Indonesia, and just slightly above other Muslim countries such as Qatar, Kuwait and Morocco (on the achievement gaps between Jews and Arab in comparative tests see also Kennet-Cohen, Cohen and Oren, 2005).⁷

2. TIMSS (see Tables 7-8 on page 22)

The second comparative international test is administered in 8th grade, i.e. at the age of 13-14. As the name (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) indicates, TIMSS examines the state of affairs in science and mathematics, and like PIRLS is also administered by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). The most recent test was run in 2007, with 49 countries participating. In Israel the sample included 3,708 students and 146 schools, excluding ultra-Orthodox schools.

In both mathematics and the sciences, Jewish students' achievements were significantly poorer than the average achievement of the countries at the top of the table. In addition, unlike in the PIRLS test, only Jews from high and middle socio-economic backgrounds placed above the average for the aggregate 49 participating countries; Jews from a low socio-economic background ranked below this average, in both math and the sciences.

Arab students' achievements placed them lower than the average of the aggregate participating countries in both math and the sciences.

3. PISA (see Tables 9-10-11 on page 23)

The third international comparative test is administered in 10th grade, at the age of 16, in three subjects: the sciences, math and reading. This is the PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) test, carried out by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The most recent test was carried out in 2006, with 57 countries participating. In Israel 4,584 students took part in the test, and 149 schools.

In the PISA test as well, marked gaps were identified between Israeli students attending different educational streams and coming from different social backgrounds. In practice, the gaps in Israel, both between and within schools, are among the greatest in all the participating countries. It should be noted that a disparity of 35 points is considered to be equivalent to an entire school year.

As in the TIMSS test, administered in 8th grade, for the PISA test as well, administered in 10th grade, the achievements of the Israeli group with the highest grades – Jews from a high socio-economic background – are not among the highest, and are only slightly higher than the average of the OECD countries. The achievements of all of the remainder – Jews from medium and low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as all Arab students – are lower than the OECD average. In practice, the achievements of Jews from a low socio-economic background are fairly close to those of Arabs from a low socio-economic background.

⁷ Because of the small numbers of students from a high socio-economic background in the Arabic-speaking sector, this category is not included.

II. The Israeli effectiveness and growth measures scale

The last test to be discussed is specific to Israel. It is the effectiveness and growth measures scale (EGMS). The test is administered by the Ministry of Education in around half of the country's elementary schools (2nd and 5th grades) and junior high (8th grade), not including the ultra-Orthodox sector and special education schools. The EGMS covers four areas of knowledge: mother tongue (Hebrew/Arabic), mathematics, English, and science and technology, and also includes questionnaires about school atmosphere, the pedagogical setting and other topics. In 2nd grade the EGMS is administered for language and literacy only.

In practically all areas, EGMS achievements tally with the international test rankings. Jews from a high socio-economic background head the ranking (because of the small numbers involved, data do not include Arabs from a high socio-economic background), and are followed by the rest, in the following order: Jews from a middle socio-economic background; Arabs from a middle socio-economic background; Jews from a low socio-economic background; and at the bottom of the scale, Arabs from a low socio-economic background.

Table 3

Achievements in Science and Technology

by Socio-economic Status, By Meizav 2008 scale

Science and Technology	Socio-economic Status of Student	All Students	Hebrew Speakers	Arabic Speakers
5th Grade	Low	449	496	416
	Middle	500	515	473
	High	542	544	
8th Grade	Low	453	469	441
	Middle	500	504	492
	High	536	536	

Table 4

Achievements in English

by Socio-economic Status, By Meizav 2008 scale

Science and Technology	Socio-economic Status of Student	All Students	Hebrew Speakers	Arabic Speakers
5th Grade	Low	465	485	450
	Middle	498	494	504
	High	532	530	
8th Grade	Low	441	463	424
	Middle	493	500	479
	High	552	553	

Table 5

Achievements in Mathematics

by Socio-economic Status, By Meizav 2008 scale

Science and Technology	Socio-economic Status of Student	All Students	Hebrew Speakers	Arabic Speakers
5th Grade	Low	456	485	434
	Middle	503	514	474
	High	544	545	
8th Grade	Low	455	460	452
	Middle	492	494	487
	High	543	543	

Notes:

1. Socio-economic status is defined a combination of parents' educational achievements, income, extent to which place of residence is peripheral and whether or not parents originated in poor countries <http://rama.education.gov.il>
2. Due to a very small number of Arabic speaking students of high socio-economic status, r data are not reported for this group.
3. The scale of grades is based on average=500 and standard deviation=100 points.

Source: The Ministry of Education, RAMA- National Authority for Evaluation in Education, *Meizav 2008, Part 1- Evaluation exams*, 17th December 2008.

Table 6

Literacy, 4th grade	
PIRLS, 2006	
State/Group in Israel	Score
Jews, National-Religious Schools, High Socio-economic Status	570
Russian Federation	565
Hong Kong	564
Jews, National-Secular Schools, High Socio-economic Status	564
Canada, Alberta	560
Singapore	558
Canada, British Columbia	558
Luxembourg	557
Canada, Ontario	555
Italy	551
Hungary	551
Sweden	549
Germany	548
Israel- Jews	548
Netherlands	547
Belgium (Flemish)	547
Bulgaria	547
Denmark	546
Canada, Nova Scotia	542
Latvia	541
United States	540
Jews, National-Secular Schools, Middle Socio-economic Status	540
England	539
Austria	538
Lithuania	537
Taiwan	535
Canada, Quebec	533
Jews, National-Religious Schools, Middle Socio-economic Status	533
New Zealand	532
Slovak Republic	531
Scotland	527
Jews, National-Secular Schools, Low Socio-economic Status	527
Jews, National-Religious Schools, Low Socio-economic Status	525
France	522
Slovenia	522
Poland	519
Spain	513
Israel- Total	512
Iceland	511
PIRLS, Average	500
Moldova	500
Belgium (French)	500
Norway	498
Romania	489
Georgia	471
Arabs, Middle Socio-economic Status	460
Macedonia	442
Trinidad and Tobago	436
Israel - Arabs	428
Iran	421
Arabs, Low Socio-economic Status	409
Indonesia	405
Qatar	353
Kuwait	330
Morocco	323
South Africa	302

Table 7

Mathematics, 8th Grade	
TIMSS 2007	
State/Group in Israel	Score
Taiwan	598
South Korea	597
Singapore	593
Hong Kong	572
Japan	570
Hungary	517
England	513
Russian Federation	512
United States	508
Lithuania	506
Czech Republic	504
Slovenia	501
Armenia	499
Jews, High Socio-economic background	497
Australia	496
Sweden	491
Malta	488
Scotland	487
Serbia	486
Jews, Middle Socio-economic background	485
Israel- Jews	484
Italy	480
Malaise	474
Norway	469
Cyprus	465
Bulgaria	464
Israel - Average	463
Ukraine	462
Romania	461
Bosnia-Herzegovina	456
TIMMS- Average	451
Lebanon	449
Thailand	441
Turkey	432
Arabs, Middle Socio-economic Status	429
Jordan	427
Jews, Low Socio-economic Status	420
Tunisia	420
Georgia	410
Israel- Arabs	408
Arabs, Low Socio-economic Status	403
Iran	403
Bahrain	398
Indonesia	397
Syria	395
Egypt	391
Algeria	387
Morocco	381
Columbia	380
Oman	372
Palestinian Authority	367
Botswana	364
Kuwait	354
El-Salvador	340
Saudi Arabia	329
Ghana	309
Qatar	307

Table 8

Sciences, 8th Grade	
TIMSS 2007	
State/Group in Israel	Score
Singapore	567
Taiwan	561
Japan	554
South Korea	553
England	542
Hungary	539
Czech Republic	539
Slovenia	538
Hong Kong	530
Russian Federation	530
United States	520
Lithuania	519
Australia	515
Sweden	511
Scotland	496
Italy	495
Jews, High Socio-economic Status	495
Armenia	488
Jews, Middle Socio-economic Status	488
Norway	487
Ukraine	485
Israel- Jews	485
Israel - Average	468
Bahrain	467
TIMMS- Average	466
Bosnia-Herzegovina	466
Romania	462
Iran	459
Malta	457
Turkey	454
Syria	452
Cyprus	452
Tunisia	445
Israel - Arabs, Middle Socio-economic Status	441
Israel - Jews, Low Socio-economic Status	428
Indonesia	427
Oman	423
Israel - Arabs	422
Georgia	421
Kuwait	418
Israel - Arabs, Low Socio-economic Status	418
Columbia	417
Lebanon	414
Egypt	408
Algeria	408
Palestinian Authority	404
Saudi Arabia	403
Morocco	402
El Salvador	387
Botswana	355
Qatar	319
Ghana	303

Table 9

Sciences, 10th Grade	
PISA 2006	
State/Group in Israel	Score
Finland	563
Hong Kong	542
Canada	534
China Taipei	532
Japan	531
Estonia	531
New Zealand	530
Australia	527
Netherlands	525
Liechtenstein	522
Korea	522
Slovenia	519
Germany	516
England	515
Czechoslovakia	513
Switzerland	512
China Macau	511
Austria	511
Belgium	510
Ireland	508
Israel - Jews, High Socio-economic Status	506
Hungary	504
Sweden	503
Average OECD	500
Poland	498
Denmark	496
France	495
Croatia	493
Iceland	491
Latvia	490
United States	489
Slovakia	488
Spain	488
Lithuania	488
Norway	487
Luxemburg	486
Russian Federation	479
Italy	475
Portugal	474
Greece	473
Israel - Jews	467
Israel - Average	454
Israel - Jews, Middle Socio-economic Status	452
Israel - Arabs, Middle Socio-economic Status	442
Chile	438
Serbia	436
Bulgaria	434
Uruguay	428
Turkey	424
Jordan	422
Thailand	421
Romania	418
Israel - Jews, Low Socio-economic Status	417
Montenegro	412
Mexico	410
Israel - Arabs	403
Israel - Arabs, Low Socio-economic Status	395
Indonesia	393
Argentina	391
Brazil	390
Columbia	388
Tunisia	386
Azerbaijan	382
Qatar	349
Kyrgyzstan	322

Table 10

Mathematics, 10th Grade	
PISA, 2006	
State/Group in Israel	Score
China Taipei	549
Finland	548
Hong Kong	547
Korea	547
Netherlands	531
Switzerland	530
Canada	527
China Macau	525
Lichtenstein	525
Japan	523
New Zealand	522
Belgium	520
Australia	520
Estonia	515
Denmark	513
Czech Republic	510
Iceland	506
Austria	505
Slovenia	504
Germany	504
Sweden	502
Ireland	501
Average OECD	498
France	496
Israel - Jews, High Socio-economic Status	496
England	495
Poland	495
Slovakia	492
Hungary	491
Luxemburg	490
Norway	490
Lithuania	486
Latvia	486
Spain	480
Azerbaijan	476
Russian Federation	476
United States	474
Croatia	467
Portugal	466
Italy	462
Israel - Jews	460
Greece	459
Israel - Jews, Middle Socio-economic Status	447
Israel - Average	442
Serbia	435
Uruguay	427
Turkey	424
Thailand	417
Romania	415
Bulgaria	413
Chile	411
Mexico	406
Israel - Arabs, Middle Socio-economic Status	406
Israel - Jews, Low Socio-economic Status	405
Montenegro	399
Indonesia	391
Jordan	384
Argentina	381
Israel - Arabs	372
Columbia	370
Brazil	370
Israel - Arabs, Low Socio-economic Status	366
Tunisia	365
Qatar	318
Kyrgyzstan	311

Table 11

Reading Comprehensive, 10th Grade	
PISA 2006	
State/Group in Israel	Score
Korea	556
Finland	547
Hong Kong	536
Canada	527
New Zealand	521
Ireland	517
Australia	513
Lichtenstein	510
Poland	508
Sweden	507
Netherlands	507
Belgium	501
Estonia	501
Switzerland	499
Japan	498
Taiwan	496
England	495
Germany	495
Denmark	494
Slovenia	494
Average OECD	492
China Macau	492
Austria	490
France	488
Israel - Jews, High Socio-economic Status	487
Iceland	484
Norway	484
Czech Republic	483
Hungary	482
Latvia	479
Luxemburg	479
Croatia	477
Portugal	472
Lithuania	470
Italy	469
Slovakia	466
Spain	461
Greece	460
Israel - Jews	456
Israel - Jews	456
Turkey	447
Israel - Jews, Middle Socio-economic Status	447
Chile	442
Russian Fed	440
Israel - Average	439
Thailand	417
Israel - Arabs, Middle Socio-economic Status	416
Uruguay	413
Mexico	410
Bulgaria	402
Serbia	401
Jordan	401
Romania	396
Indonesia	393
Brazil	393
Montenegro	392
Israel - Jews, Low Socio-economic Status	390
Columbia	385
Tunisia	380
Argentina	374
Israel - Arabs	372
Israel - Arabs, Low Socio-economic Status	363
Azerbaijan	353
Qatar	312
Kyrgyzstan	285

Note: Socio-economic status is defined as a combination of parents' educational achievements, income, extent to which place of residence is peripheral and whether or not parents originated in poor countries <http://rama.education.gov.il>

Source: Ministry of Education, RAMA- National Authority for Evaluation in Education, *International Tests, TIMSS 2007*, December 9th, 2008.

VI. The Status of teachers in an era of markets

We have seen that the State has failed to introduce any counterweights to the dynamics of separation and inequality that have increased over the years. One of the reasons for this is the erosion of an important State resource – the teaching force – as a result of a number of factors. The first is the historical decline in the prestige of the profession; the second, the protracted efforts on the part of the State and commercial elements to replace the existing teaching force with some non-existent and imaginary alternative body; the third is the introduction of employment business models into the teachers' room at school; the fourth, the State's neglect of teachers when considering educational reforms; the fifth, the intrinsic separation within the education system, which has split the teaching profession asunder; and sixth, the budget-slashing policy (see next chapter) that resulted in confrontations between the State and the teachers.

Eroded public status

In the pre-1948 period, teachers (unlike today, most of them were men) as a group enjoyed great prestige, the result of the fact that they were active partners in the nation-building project: making the Hebrew language the country's everyday tongue, constructing the Zionist narrative, and training the generation that manned the fighting and rural settlement organizations of the Yishuv - the Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine. The teaching profession attracted many persons from the Yishuv's educated classes.

When Israel was established in 1948, teachers were the most tangible everyday representatives of the State for hundreds of immigrant and Arab children, newcomers to the new State education system, as well as for their parents. However, as time went on, the teaching profession found itself competing for prestige with new jobs in the State apparatus (Lissak, 1961; Ben Dor, 1966). The place of male teachers was taken by their female counterparts, who in the beginning were almost all Ashkenazi women from veteran families. As the years passed, additional employment opportunities emerged for these women, too, as the higher education system expanded and new

jobs became available in the public and business sectors. As the Ashkenazi women moved on to new careers, Mizrahi women gradually took over the teaching jobs. For the latter, the teaching profession was an avenue to social mobility. Nowadays, teaching in Israel is a "pink collar" job, in other words, a feminine profession whose wages, prestige and chances of advancement are relatively lower than those of "white collar" jobs. In addition, most women teachers come from the middle and lower-middle classes (Ariav 2008:21-23; Hoz and Keinan 9:2008). Today's teacher is no longer an instantly recognizable representative of the State; rather, she is part of a massive army of female "State employees."

The changes in the status of the teaching force took place in parallel to processes reviewed in the preceding chapters and the following one: the confrontations over integration, the decline in the status of public education, and the erosion in the education budget. All of these contributed to increasing reservations about public education on the part of the affluent and to their preference for separatist schools. It may reasonably be assumed that the changes that occurred in the teaching force also played a part in the tendency to switch to separatist public schools. Thus, in return for extra payments, children from affluent families enjoy not only more diversified curricula, but above all teachers with a class background similar to their own. For their part, the separatist public schools contribute to the splintering of the teaching force and the deterioration in the collective status of teachers by employing a large number of teachers on a personal contract basis, circumventing collective wage agreements.

In other words, there is no longer a single image associated with the word "teacher." Instead, we have a number of images: "regular" teachers, "special" teachers, and so on. And this of course is only part of the picture. Today there are not only secular and religious teachers, but also teachers from Agudat Israel, Shas, and Chabad, as well as democratic, anthroposophical and other teachers. Instead of the typical teacher representing the State, she represents a particular educational sector, or sometimes even a fleeting educational fad. The cumula-

tive outcome is the weakening of the public status of both the teaching force and the teaching profession.

As it became clear that Israel's students score poorly in international tests, commentators have begun to make stereotypical use of the changing gender, class and ethnic composition of teachers in order to point an accusing finger at the quality of the teaching force. Stereotypical views also underline the solution proposed by many, including the Dovrat Commission, of attracting to the teaching profession so-called "strong populations" – a widespread code name for educated Ashkenazi Jews, both male and female. Tellingly, this is a solution frequently proposed in other public policy areas as well. Examples are the "Negev 2015" plan for developing the Negev, based largely on the idea of attracting "strong populations" to the Negev from the central part of the country, instead of investing in the present-day population of the Negev (see Swirski, 2007).

"The problem of the quality of the teaching force" is behind efforts to improve teachers' education. For years, one of the most significant differences between various schools in Israel, and especially between schools in the central part of the country and those in areas remote from the center, was the teachers' educational level. In 1978, a commission under Judge Moshe Etzioni recommended the academization of teacher training establishments and the setting up of a four-year training course. The Ministry of Education adopted the recommendation, and the academization of the major teacher training colleges was nearly completed within two decades. It was, however, only partial: the academic administration of the training establishments was left in the hands of the Ministry of Education instead of the Council for Higher Education (CHE), which administers the universities and academic colleges. The fact that the teacher training colleges were, as Tamar Ariav puts it, left "outside the higher education family" (Ariav, 10:2008) meant inferior employment conditions that made it more difficult to recruit teaching faculty and to develop an independent academic administration (Ariav, 10:2008). In the years since the Etzioni Commission, many other commissions (Kedar, 191; Ariav and Katz, 2004; Ariav, 2005, Dovrat, 2005) have recom-

mended moving the teaching colleges to full CHE administration and budgeting, but to date the recommendations have not been implemented.

In addition to academization, there have been other reforms, whose major goal has been to turn teaching into an independent profession requiring formal and distinct training at specialized establishments. The problem is the absence of clarity as to what constitutes good training for teaching. Many researchers have noted the difficulty of agreeing on the nature of desirable teacher training, and in practice, training curricula vary from one country to another, and from one institution to another within the same country (Ariav 2008:7-26). In addition, teacher training institutions are not necessarily a preferred source for recruiting new teachers: many schools prefer to recruit teachers who are not graduates of such institutions. Further, many teachers register for a course that will give them a teaching diploma, only after actually working in teaching for many years, without having had any formal training.

The teacher enhancement policy did not change the picture. In fact, the expectations of academization were unrealistic, if we bear in mind that the key problems of the education system are separation and inequality. In such a system, the teachers – and more specifically the extent of their formal education – are only one component among the aggregate of forces that produce flawed functioning and unsatisfactory output.

In the last decade, the push to academization, which has largely run its course, has given way to a new push: the introduction of business models for teacher employment. While academization sought to upgrade teachers' abilities, business models seek to give employers maximum flexibility and latitude. It should be mentioned that today, the State is no longer the sole employer of teachers; it works together with a growing number of non-governmental bodies, some of them commercial.

In this context, two intertwined trends should be noted. One is embodied in the policy of "school autonomy" (or "self-ad-

ministration”), which seeks to decentralize the responsibility that was previously in the hands of the Ministry of Education. To a great extent, this policy subverts the need for improving the pay and status of teachers, since school principals, forced as they are to function in a budget-cutting environment, end up backed into the corner of “managerial flexibility,” i.e. having to reduce the cost of teachers’ labor, decreasing their professional autonomy, and introducing inferior conditions of employment. The second trend is embodied in the policy of assessment, also taken from the business world. Every school is assessed according to its achievements, and in each school every teacher is assessed according to her/his achievements. As perceived by every teacher, students’ achievements impact on continued employment; as perceived by the school, students’ achievements determine the principal’s fate. The assessment policy considerably limits teachers’ professional autonomy, since it subjects them to an intensive schedule of tests and rigorous reporting obligations. Instead of imparting learning skills and undertaking education in the classical sense, they have no choice but to adopt an approach based on student success in tests. The out-and-out emphasis on achievements further aggravates separation in the education system, because it brings about pressure to remove low-achieving students from the standard tracks, as their performance makes it harder to achieve standard achievement levels.

The State has, in fact, lost a good deal of the control it previously had over the teaching force. In many instances, it has even renounced this control, whether to “market forces” or to a particular educational subsystem. This loss naturally impacts on the State’s ability to introduce desirable reforms.

The weakening of the teachers’ unions

In the geographic area that was to become the State of Israel, the teachers were one of the first professional groups to become unionized - as early as 1903 (Rachel Elboim-Dror, 1990). As we have seen, before Israel’s founding in 1948, teachers as a group enjoyed great social prestige. In 1958, the high school teachers resigned from the Israel Teachers Union (ITU) and formed a separate association, the Secondary School Teachers Organization (SSTO). Despite the split, each of the two resulting organizations continued to be large and strong, perceiving themselves as capable of undertaking action on a nationwide level. In the 1960s, for example, the ITU headed the struggle

against the major reform of 1968. Here the ITU undoubtedly had a manifest vested interest in organizational terms – the fear that teachers at the junior high schools, who were to be required to be college graduates, would join the SSTO rather than the ITU. However, there was another motive, no less strong: the fear (which turned out to be justified) that the reform would lead to the introduction of a specialized framework for the elite (David Levi-Faur, 1987). This was a fight that the ITU lost.

Since then, in practice there has been no public force capable of effectively resisting the State and business-initiated processes leading to the strengthening of separation and inequality. As we saw above, teachers’ unions were not even invited to take part in the deliberations of the Dovrat Commission, the most important public committee on education in recent years. In practice, educational policy has been undertaken without input by bodies able to propose pedagogical considerations to counterbalance narrowly based State considerations (reducing budgetary expenditure) and business considerations (adopting corporate management models). “The natural partners” for shaping educational policy are now perceived to be business and financial figures such as those on the Dovrat Commission and in the Hakol Hinuch movement, with teachers being perceived as mere pawns in the system.

Another change for the worse has occurred in teachers’ employment patterns, following the entry of “market forces” into schools: today, thousands of teachers are employed by non-state organizations, some profit-making and others non-profit bodies. Two of the most prominent non-state organizations in this field are the René Cassin Foundation in Jerusalem and the Yuval Chinuch Company in Tel Aviv. Both were set up by the local authorities in the context of the shift to self-administration of schools, and their primary role is to provide schools with managerial services as well as to provide teachers – substitute teachers, teachers for enrichment classes, and subsequently also teachers preparing students for matriculation examinations and providing instruction in the basic subjects. In addition to these two examples, there are also commercial manpower companies such as Gvanim Hadrachot Ltd., which offers schools “cut-price teachers.”⁸

8 For example, NIS 4,200 per hour per week per year, instead of NIS 5,500. With the addition of the employer’s contribution, the annual “saving” can amount to more than NIS 30,000 (Erez, 2006).

In addition to manpower companies in the teaching field, there are also hundreds of associations and commercial organizations that run study and enrichment programs at schools. These associations and organizations employ teachers on a temporary or hourly basis, without tenure, at low pay levels and sometimes without social benefits. Business organizations tend to dismiss teachers at the end of one school year, and re-hire them at the beginning of the next (Kav Laoved, 2009). According to an estimate by the Secondary Schools Teaching Organization, some 10% of the teaching force in secondary education are employed without having an established position, in arrangements that sidestep the existing collective wage agreements (Ran Erez, interview, March 15, 2009). Unfortunately, there are no accurate figures about the extent of this situation (Davidov, 2009). These employment patterns harm the professional and organizational status of teachers as a whole in a number of ways:

- Firstly, they bring about differential status in the staff room. There are four main statuses: (i) a minority of teachers are employed on personal contracts with no social benefits but with high salaries; (ii) most teachers are employed under collective wage agreement conditions, including tenure; (iii) teachers employed under collective wage agreement conditions, but without tenure; (iv) teachers employed on personal contracts, without tenure, on a temporary basis and on inferior terms.
- Secondly, the new approaches to employment weaken teachers' trade unions and adversely affect their ability to influence the profession's working conditions.
- Thirdly, the new approaches to employment undermine the job security of teachers, who in any case have an inferior employment status.
- Fourthly, the new approaches to employment worsen teachers' status vis-à-vis parents, as many of the latter in practice become their employers within the setting of non-profit parents' organizations that operate alongside the school.

Low wages

Despite having been weakened, the ITU and the SSTO are still large-scale trade unions. In 2009, the Israel Teachers' Union had more than 88,000 members, while the Secondary School Teachers Organization had some 45,000 members. These are two of Israel's biggest trade unions, the third being the State

Employees Union. This state of affairs should give teachers a distinct edge on the labor market, where today most employees are neither unionized nor enjoy the protection of collective wage agreements. Some workers' unions in Israel's public sector are known for their success in securing good wages and benefits for their members. Examples include the personnel of government monopolies, such as the Israel Ports Authority, the Israel Electric Corporation and the Airports Authority.

However, this does not apply to the teachers' trade unions. For years, teachers' wages have been among the lowest for public sector personnel.⁹ In addition, the teachers' unions have also had trouble renewing their collective wage agreements. For example, until 2007 teachers' wages were based on a collective agreement from 1994, even though the achievements of that agreement were eroded within just a few years (Wasserman, interview, March 4, 2009).

According to the person in charge of wages in the Finance Ministry, the collective wage agreement known as "New Horizon," which was signed in 2007 with the ITU, has already led to "some increase" in the wages of teaching personnel who are state employees. At just half of the average wage level for Defense Ministry personnel, the salaries of teachers who are state personnel are lower than the average wages of state personnel as a whole (Finance Ministry, January 19, 2009).

The "New Horizon" agreement was presented by the government as a "comprehensive reform in elementary and junior high education" (government decision 4083, September 14, 2008). In practice, this is a salary and working conditions agreement for teachers, devoid of any pedagogical or systemic changes. The core of the agreement, which is supposed to be implemented in stages and is to be completed by 2013, is shortening teachers' working weeks to five days or 36 hours, of which 26 are to be frontal hours, plus five hours for private teaching, during which teachers are to work with small groups of students, and five more "overtime" hours for teachers to prepare their lesson plans. In return, new teachers will be given a significant pay raise. The other side of the coin is known as "administra-

⁹ In 2008, Israel's state service employed 87,791 teaching personnel in 75,601 full-time positions. The average monthly wage, including annual payments and refunds of expenses at government ministries, including personnel employed on special personal contracts, was NIS 12,654. The average wage for teaching personnel in the public sector in 2008 was NIS 9,116 (from report on salary costs of personnel employed in Israel's state service for 2008).

tive flexibility,” under which principals are given the increased power to hire and fire personnel. Another important aspect of the agreement is that principals will to a large extent have the latitude to decide on promotions involving salary increases. In addition, promotion will be slower than is generally the case today, and at the top three levels, there will be a promotional quota, so that only a limited number of teachers will be able to climb the professional ladder to the top rungs. Principals will also have their own salary table. Hand in hand with implementing the agreement, the Israeli government also undertook to reduce class size to a maximum of 32 children.

The "New Horizon" agreement is good for new teachers, but experienced teachers are likely to be adversely affected when it comes to promotion, benefits and pensions (the agreement makes no reference at all to pensioners). Seemingly one of the agreement's goals was to encourage long-serving teachers to retire and young people to join the system.

The budgetary cost of implementing "New Horizon" is estimated at five billion shekels, to be spread over the 2007-2013 period. This is a fairly low figure, reflecting as it does the fact that the agreement does not include any investment in infrastructure (needed in order to be able to run a long school day properly and also work with small groups of students). Most of the pay increase is to benefit new teachers.

At the time of writing, the "New Horizon" agreement is being implemented at a snail's pace. One reason is budgetary: first of all, the budget is spread over five years; secondly, the system-wide cutbacks made to the country's budget for 2009-2010 have, inter alia, adversely affected the extent to which "New Horizon" can be implemented. A third reason is the fierce opposition of teachers, above all of the long-serving ones: they claim that although monthly salaries have risen, hourly rates have decreased as a result of a longer teaching day. They also assert that "New Horizon" has a negative affect on pension and continuing education rights. Many schools that were included in the "New Horizon" plan are only partially implementing the agreement, since they lack the requisite infrastructure. The Ministry of Education and the Israel Teachers Union are bringing major pressure to bear on teachers to adhere to the agreement – or to retire (Hitoreeroot site, <http://www.2all.co.il/web/Sites/morim/DEFAULT.asp>; Anat Schneider and Tami Hanuna, interview, December 23, 2008). In March 2009, the SSTO, which had not adhered to the agreement, submitted a court petition against the Ministry of Education and the finance ministry, demanding that the implementation of "New Horizon" be halted because of pressure directed at teachers not interested in joining the plan (Zalivovich, March 22, 2009).

It should be noted that until 2007, the two teachers' organizations were united in a common front against all efforts to implant economic market patterns in schools. The SSTO's opposition to the agreement led it, in 2007, to call a secondary

school strike lasting two months. In the wake of the strike, a collective wage agreement was signed with the ITU, including salary benefits, the restoration of teaching hours to the system, and the setting up of several joint committees to hammer out consensual reforms. However, a court case brought by the SSTO in 2009 contends that the State is not complying with the agreements laid down in the collective wage agreement about reducing class sizes and allocating budgetary supplements as early as the 2009 school year (Point 13/08, SSTO vs. Ministry of Finance et al.).

International comparative aspects

The relatively low salary levels of teachers in Israel are reflected in a comparison with the salaries of teachers in the OECD member countries. The organization's 2006 data indicate that the maximum annual salary for teachers in Israel under the collective wage agreements (at elementary, junior high and high school) was the equivalent of US\$ 21,389 – less than half the average wage in OECD countries. A more significant comparison is based on the weighting of salaries in the local gross national product per capita. According to OECD figures, in 2006 the maximum salary for Israeli teachers was 68% of Israel's GDP per capita, while in the OECD countries, the average was between 122% and 134% of GDP per capita (OECD, 2008, Table D3.1). Even if we take account of the growth in teachers' wages under the "New Horizon" agreement, which according to the Finance Ministry's salary official amounted to 15%, teachers' pay in Israel is still lower than GDP per capita in Israel – at 78% of this figure; and of course lower than the average in the OECD countries.

Domestic comparative aspects

The pay statistics used by the OECD are those of teachers who are State employees and employed on the basis of a collective wage agreement. However, as we have seen, the number of teachers employed by non-State bodies and not under collective wage agreements is growing steadily. The wages of the latter are lower than the levels that we have looked at so far. This can be seen from the statistics in the CBS incomes survey for those employed in education. Although the category of "persons employed in education" includes persons other than teachers, at 76%, the latter undoubtedly constitute by far the largest group in this category. And indeed, the CBS figures indicate that in 2008 the average wage of persons employed in education was NIS 6,311 (CBS, 2008 Incomes Survey: in press). This figure is an average for both male and female employees. If we take women only, we find that in the year in question (2008) their average wage amounted to NIS 5,687 (CBS, 2008 Incomes Survey: in press). This was lower than women's average wage in the economy (NIS 6,077), and certainly lower than the general average wage (men and women) in the economy – NIS 7,922 (CBS, 2008 Incomes Survey: in press).

VII. Financing the education system

Erosion of public financing, growth of inequality

The separation and inequality that characterize Israel's education system are reflected not only in its organizational aspects (the division into subsystems or streams), and its pedagogical aspects (the fact that different students learn different things of varying levels of complexity), but also in its budget figures. Despite the fact that most of the financing for the system is public, and as such should be distributed equally among all schools and students, in practice there is variance in respect of students and schools regarding the budget available to them, whether the source is central government, municipal government, or private. Inequality in budgets is one of the reasons for inequality among schools and students, in terms of the number of teaching hours, the richness of the curriculum, the quality of the teaching force and the physical infrastructure of the school.

Budgetary inequality is a result of two main factors. The first is the historical advantage enjoyed by the schools that served the Jewish community of Mandatory Palestine, over those serving the two groups that came under the aegis of the Israeli education system after 1948 – the Mizrahi Jews and the Palestinians. The second factor is the entrance of private money into schools' financing arrangements.

The old-established schools enjoyed advantages in respect of buildings, equipment, and the number of accredited and experienced teachers who earned higher salaries; these schools also enjoyed a richer range of curricula, libraries, and laboratories. There is a very straightforward explanation for this state of affairs: most of these schools were constructed prior to 1948, over a period of years. In contrast, in places where new immigrants were settled, as well as in the Palestinian villages, the need was immediate but it took years for proper buildings to be erected and accredited teachers to be engaged. This initial advantage was further strengthened as a result of the fact that the well-established institutions were practiced at making the best use of the resources that the new State made available to the education system. Within just over a decade, the government began to take steps to narrow the gaps that had developed,

including investments in construction and upgrading teacher training in the new Jewish localities. However, while these processes were going on, the older institutions managed to maintain and consolidate their advantages. The 1960s saw the start of a compensation process, in the form of extra class hours and special curricula for students "in need of special nurturing." The term in Hebrew – *teunei tipuach* – literally means "in need of nurturing." For years, these students were defined as children from large families with immigrant Jewish parents from Asian and African countries who had little education themselves (Algrabli, 1974). Because the definition of "in need of special nurturing" was expressed in ethnic-cum-Jewish terms, the upshot was an absurd situation that excluded Arab students from compensatory budgetary and pedagogic arrangements.¹⁰

As already indicated, the second factor behind budgetary inequality between schools is the entrance of private money into the education system since 1985. This was not, admittedly, something completely new, since prior to 1979, the State charged tuition for attending Israeli high schools. At the time tuition applied to all high school students (in those days, just over half of the age group), while the private money that began to infiltrate the system after 1985 came from only some parents and brought about financial stratification among high school students. In addition, the new private money arrived when high school studies were defined as "free education." As mentioned above, the turning point came in the wake of cutbacks in the education budget, forcing schools to reduce teaching hours. In reaction, well-off parents began to finance the missing hours out of pocket. In next to no time, a gap opened up between schools capable of raising money from parents – and from other financial sources – and those lacking such capabilities. Unsurprisingly, the former were in affluent neighborhoods and localities in central Israel, while the latter were schools that had previously suffered from underfunding: schools in Arab

¹⁰ Only in 1994, when Yitzhak Rabin was prime minister, were Arabs who were Israeli citizens also recognized as being entitled to "nurture" budgets. However, within a few years, these special budgets were axed: see Swirski and Swirski, 2003. In any case, Arab students receive fewer "nurture" hours: a study based on 1999 data revealed that the average allocation of "nurture funds" per Arab student was just 20% of the equivalent for each Jewish student with the same level of deprivation (Kahan, 2009).

localities, and schools in development towns and “southern” low-income Jewish neighborhoods in the big towns and cities.

The result of this development is that a relatively small number of schools are rich in resources, while the majority of schools have resources that meet basic needs only.

Unfortunately, the available information about educational financing suffers from a major lack of transparency. This being the case, it is not possible to calculate the resources available to different schools.

We now turn to a number of the key aspects of the financing issue: national expenditure on education and its breakdown by public and private sources; the Ministry of Education budget; the local authorities’ education budgets; parental co-payments; and the problem of the lack of transparency regarding the financial statistics of the education system.

A. National expenditure on education

Sources of funding for the education system

Financing¹¹ of the education system comes from a number of sources:

1. Ministry of Education budget;
2. Local authority budgets;
3. Households that spend money on “parental co-payments”;
4. The third sector (non-profit foundations and institutions), which also finances various educational activities;
5. The business sector, which finances enrichment programs, the acquisition of equipment and the like.

The combination of all of these sources gives us “the national expenditure on education” – all of the money spent on education in Israel during a given year. Generally speaking, the data on national expenditure on education relate to all stages of education, from preschool to institutes of higher learning. Since this document is not about higher education, we have removed data for higher education wherever possible. Hence when we refer below to the national expenditure on education, we are talking about ages 5 through 17, covering pre-elementary (compulsory preschool), elementary and secondary schooling (up to and including the 12th grade).

In 2005, the last year for which there are detailed statistics, Israel’s national expenditure on pre-elementary (compulsory preschool), elementary and secondary education amounted to NIS 39.5 billion (CBS, March 10, 2009; in 2008 prices). The breakdown is as follows: NIS 27.1 billion - central government expenditure, NIS 3.6 billion – local government expenditure; NIS 7.8 billion household expenditures; and other smaller sums expended by non-profit institutions. In other words, public financing was responsible for 80% of the national expenditure on education, with private expenditure making up 20%.¹²

Compared with the West, Israel’s national expenditure per student is low

International comparisons can be made on the basis of data about the proportion of GDP constituting national education expenditure. In Israel, the comparison is normally made with OECD states, which comprise most of the world’s wealthy countries as well as a few of the most prominent developing ones,

11 The CBS categorizes national expenditure on education according to implementing sector and financing sector. Implementing sector includes direct expenditure on labor, goods and services, as well as estimates for depreciation. When categorizing expenditure by *financing sector*, every sector’s financing is defined as the total direct expenditure on goods, services, maintenance, grants and transfers and other payments to other sectors (for extra detail see CBS, *National Expenditure on Education – 1962-2007*, Publication No. 1360, January 2009). Unless otherwise indicated, the following statistical analysis will focus on national expenditure by financing sector.

12 In the CBS statistics about national expenditure on education, the figure for the third sector is zero (in practice, less than 0.5% of national expenditure on education. This being the case, the discussion below will focus on two sources only: the public sector (central government and local authorities) and households.

Table 12

National Expenditure on Education

per Student

	Elementary Schools	Junior/Senior High Schools
Israel	4,923	5,858
OECD countries	6,437	8,006

Source: OECD, 2009, Table B.1.1a.

Table 13

Increase in the National Expenditure on Elementary, High School and Non-Academic Tertiary Education

1995-2006

	1995	2000	2005
Israel	85	100	113
OECD Average	87	100	121

Source: OECD, 2009, Table B.2.5

Table 14

National Expenditure on Education, Pre-school, Elementary and Junior High/High School,

1972-2005, In NIS millions, constant 2008 prices

Year	National Expenditure on Education
1972/73	8,817
1975/76	10,254
1980/81	12,693
1985/86	13,229
1990	18,845
1995	30,730
2000	37,457
2001	40,153
2002	39,612
2003	37,580
2004	38,942
2005	39,471

Sources: Adva Center analysis of CBS, *National Expenditure on Education, 1962-2007*, March 2009; CBS, August 11, 2009, "The National Expenditure on Education, 2005-2008," Press Release; CBS, Statistical Abstract of Israel, various years; Unpublished data provided by the CBS.

Table 15

Public and Private Funding of the National Expenditure on Education for Pre-school, Elementary and Junior/High Schools

1995-2005, Percentages of the total national expenditure on education

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Public	82%	83%	83%	82%	81%	82%	81%	80%	80%	79%	80%
Private	18%	17%	17%	18%	19%	18%	19%	20%	20%	21%	20%

Sources: Adva Center analysis of CBS, *National Expenditure on Education, 1962-2007*, March 2009; CBS, August 11, 2009, "The National Expenditure on Education, 2005-2008," Press Release; Unpublished data provided by the CBS.

including South Korea, Mexico and Brazil. China and India are not included. Israel recently applied for OECD membership, and as a result Israel appears in the organization's tables.

The most recent data published by the OECD are for 2006. They show that in GDP terms, national expenditure on education¹³ for ages 5-17 in Israel – 4.4% of GDP – was the third highest expenditure in the OECD, where the average figure was 3.8% of GDP (OECD, 2009: Table 2.4B).

This figure would appear to underscore the major importance attached to education in Israel for ages 5-17. However, what the high figure reflects is a demographic reality: the proportion of children and adolescents in the general Israeli population is higher than in most OECD countries (only Mexico, Brazil and Chile have similar proportions, as well as tiny Iceland; see OECD, 2008: Graph B.24). Because of this state of affairs, Israel has to spend a relatively higher proportion of its national income on education if it wants to give its children and adolescents a reasonably good education system.

A more significant comparison can be made on the basis of national expenditure on education *calculated per student*.¹⁴ When this national expenditure is calculated, Israel's position drops to below average. In 2006, the average for the OECD countries was US\$ 6,437 (in PPP terms) per student in elementary education, and US\$ 8,006 (in PPP terms) per student in high school education. The corresponding figures for Israel were \$4,923 and \$5,858 respectively (OECD 2009: Table B1.1a). In these two areas of expenditure, Israel ranked twenty-third out of 34 countries.

Some argue that calculating the investment in education by national expenditure per student is also an unsatisfactory approach, and that this should be weighted by the country's wealth, since – so the argument goes – it is only logical that a rich country will invest more in education than a poor one. This can be examined by calculating national expenditure per student relative to per capita GDP, which is a comparative index of wealth. Using this approach, national expenditure on education in Israel is still not particularly high. For pre-elementary education, the figure was 15% of per capita GDP – compared with the average of 18% for the OECD countries; for elementary education, the figure was 20% of per capita GDP – the same as the average in the OECD countries; and for high school, the figure was 24%, slightly under the 25% OECD average (OECD, 2009; Table B1.4). The figures also show that there are countries that invest relatively more than Israel: for example, South Korea and Portugal (both of which have a lower per capita GDP than Israel) invest higher proportions of their per capita GDP in both elementary and high-school education. In other words, national expenditure on education is not simply a function of

a country's wealth, but also of national priorities: today South Korea and Portugal are investing more in elementary education than would be expected from their per capita GDP.

Not only is Israel's per student national expenditure on education not particularly high: it is not growing at a rate similar to that in the OECD countries. Defining national expenditure on education in 2000 as 100, national expenditure on elementary and secondary education in the OECD countries grew from 88 in 1995 to 121 in 2006, while in Israel growth was smaller, from 87 to 113 (OECD 2009: Table B2.5). Interestingly, both in Israel and the OECD, the growth in national expenditure on education was slightly higher than that of GDP, but during the period in question, the average GDP in the OECD grew more than that of Israel.

A historical review: pre- and post-1985

Data that enable national expenditure to be examined by financing sector for pre-elementary, elementary and secondary education, excluding higher education, are available only as of 1972/73.¹⁵

As can be seen in Table 14 on the previous page, in the eight years between 1972/73 and 1980/81, national expenditure on education for ages 5-17 increased by 44%, from NIS 8.8 billion to NIS 12.7 billion. The main reason for this growth was the expansion in secondary education. As explained earlier, under the 1968 reform, the Compulsory Education Law was extended up to the age of 15, requiring investment in junior high and high school construction, and resulting in the expansion of high school attendance, which grew by 75% in the 1970s. This expansion was largely financed by public funding.

In 1980 the expansion of the education system came to a halt, first and foremost because the central government budget, the primary source of funding for this expansion, ceased growing as it had previously. In 1985, the budget was slashed under the emergency plan for stabilizing the economy. In point of fact, the education budget only returned to growth after the end of the decade, when the first wave of Jewish immigrants arrived from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

National education expenditure for ages 5-17 also returned to growth in the 1990s, in the wake of the expansion of the system to accommodate the young people from the CIS and Ethiopia. The greatest growth took place from 1991 through 1996, after which growth leveled out.

National expenditure on education for ages 5-17 peaked in 2001 at NIS 40.1 billion. However, this was immediately followed by the economic crisis of the Second Intifada, which

13 National expenditure on educational institutions does not include such expenditure as acquisition of equipment or private lessons by households.

14 See footnote 4 above.

15 Until 1989/90, the data for national expenditure on education related to the year between April 31 and March 31.

Table 16

Households' Share in Financing the National Expenditure on Pre-school, Elementary and Junior High/High School Education

1972-2005, In NIS millions, constant 2008 prices

1972/73	2,177
1975/76	2,066
1980/81	2,212
1985/86	2,769
1990	3,963
1995	5,409
2000	6,898
2005	7,786

Sources: Adva Center analysis of CBS, *National Expenditure on Education, 1962-2007*, March 2009; CBS, August 11, 2009, "The National Expenditure on Education, 2005-2008," Press Release; Unpublished data provided by the CBS.

among other things, led to the contraction of the national expenditure on education.

The economy began to grow again in the second half of 2003, but this did not result in growth in the national education expenditure for a number of years. According to figures published by the CBS in August 2009, the national expenditure on education¹⁶ (including higher education) grew by 9% between 2006 and 2008. Unfortunately, from these figures it is not possible to separate expenditure on higher education from that on education for ages 5-17. It may however be reasonably assumed that the growth was recorded for both of these items of expenditure.

Israel was affected by the worldwide financial and economic crisis at the end of 2008. Statistics on national education expenditure in 2009 are not yet available, but judging by previous periods of recession it may be reasonably assumed that the recession brought about some reduction in educational expenditures.

Growth in the share of private financing

Financing for the national education expenditure comes from two main sources: the public coffers (central government and local authorities) and households.

Generalizing somewhat, it can be said that since 1970 at least, the public coffers have financed some 80% of this expenditure, while households have financed around 20%. However, different trends can be identified. During the period of mass

immigration from the CIS and Ethiopia, and especially during the years of the Rabin administration, the Ministry of Education budget rose, thereby increasing the proportion of public financing of the national expenditure on education for ages 5-17, to around 82%-83%. However, in the wake of the large budgetary cuts of the Second Intifada period, this proportion dropped to 79%-80%. At the same time, private funding began to increase, from 17%-18% to 20%-21%. Although in percentage terms this appears to be a negligible increase, it should be remembered that we are talking about fairly large sums. If we recall that in 2005 the national expenditure on education amounted to NIS 35 billion, one percent represented NIS 0.4 billion, and four percent NIS 1.6 billion.

Growth in household expenditure

Household expenditure is a key component of the private funding of the education system. The table above illustrates the growth in the amounts spent by households.¹⁷ Between 1972, the first year for which we have figures, and the 1985 emergency plan to stabilize the economy, the total annual figure spent by households varied between NIS 2 and NIS 2.8 billion (in 2008 prices). One of the explanations for the absence of significant growth in the total for households during this period, despite the increase in the number of high school students, is the abolition of tuition for high school studies.

After 1985, there was a steady growth in household expenditure, reaching NIS 7.8 million in 2005.

17 The figures relate to households and non-government associations. Up to 1992, it was possible to distinguish between the two components in CBS figures. We assume that most expenditure is made by households.

16 By implementing sector.

B. Ministry of Education budget

The largest component in the national expenditure on education is the Ministry of Education budget. This is the second largest of all government budgets: only the Defense Ministry's is larger (approximately twice as large). The Ministry of Education budget (not including culture, sport and development) for 2009 totals NIS 30.3 billion (in current prices).

In recent decades, the Ministry of Education budget has waxed and waned. It grew in 1970, mainly because of the expansion of high school education. In contrast, throughout the 1980s it remained largely frozen (with the exception of 1982 and 1987), and even suffered major cutbacks (Kop, Blankett and Sharon, 1989:45).

In the first half of the 1990s, the education budget swelled with the arrival of Jews from the CIS and Ethiopia, as well as with the signing of the 1994 collective wage agreement with the teachers' unions, which increased teachers' salaries.

In the first half of the first decade of the 21st century, the education budget was slashed as part of the large-scale budgetary cutbacks made during the period of the Second Intifada. The upshot was that for six consecutive years, from 2001 through 2006, the education budget was frozen at around NIS

26 billion (in 2008 prices), at a time when student numbers grew steadily.

It was not until 2007 that, for the first time, the Ministry of Education budget was significantly increased, to NIS 28.3 billion (in 2008 prices). The main reason was the "New Horizon" agreement, which promised the Ministry of Education a budgetary supplement of some five billion shekels, to be spread over six years.¹⁸

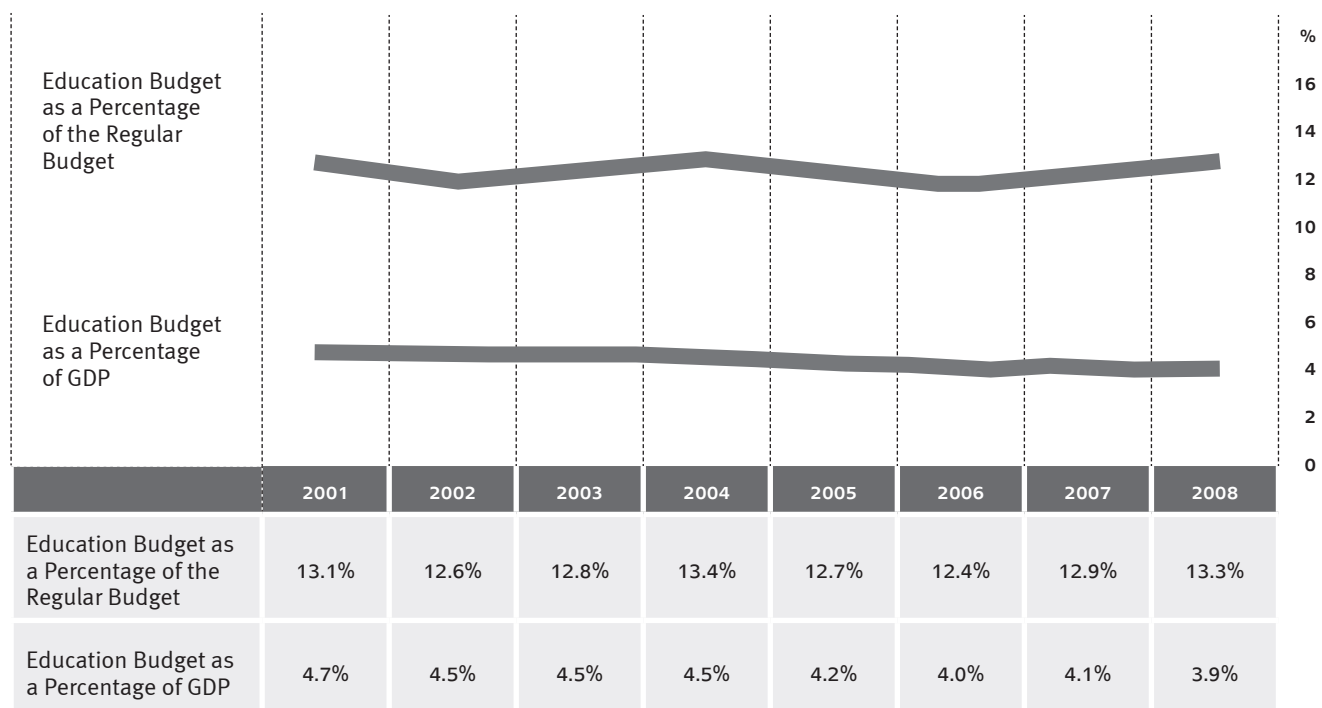
The Ministry of Education budget can be examined not just in terms of its absolute size, but also according to its share in Israel's total national budget and GDP. The table below shows that during the last decade, the education budget has generally speaking maintained its share of the national budget, at around 13%. However, after 2001 its share dropped below 13%, remaining at this lower level until 2008 (apart from one year, 2004).

The same does not hold true of the weight of the Ministry of Education budget in GDP. In 2001, the education budget was 4.7% of GDP, but in 2008, its weight dropped to 3.9% of GDP. We have discussed the reasons behind this state of affairs above: the education budget was frozen for six years at around NIS 26 billion, including the years when Israel was enjoying significant economic growth. As a result, a drop occurred in the weight of the education budget in GDP (which began to

¹⁸ The agreement was signed on September 10, 2007 and came into force immediately.

Figure 1:

Education Budget as a Percentage of the Regular State Budget & Education Budget as a Percentage of GDP
2001-2008



Sources: Adva Center analysis of Ministry of Finance, Office of the CFO, *Annual Report*, various years; CBS, "National Accounts of Israel, 2008," Press Release, March 10, 2009; CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, various years.

grow again in 2003). The most significant growth took place in the period 2005-2008 - four years with a 5% average annual economic growth rate. In other words, Israel's economic growth before the outbreak of the international financial crisis was not translated into simultaneous growth in education budgeting.

Erosion of the budget for teaching hours

The single most important component of the Ministry of Education budget is that for teaching hours, which finances teaching at elementary, junior high and high schools. The teaching hours budget suffered a serious blow in the wake of the large budgetary cuts during the 2001-2003 Second Intifada period. Figure 2 illustrates the extent of the erosion in this budget, calculated on a per student basis: from a figure of NIS 9,329 per student in 2001, to NIS 7,900 per student in 2006. In 2007 and 2008, the teaching hours budget returned to growth on a per student basis, and it is set to grow further in 2009. However, it will still be lower than it was in 2001, as can be seen from the diagram above.

The erosion of the teaching hours budget had a negative impact particularly on the two state streams - the secular state stream¹⁹ and its religious counterpart. Between 2001 and 2008, there was no growth whatsoever in the teaching hours budget for these subsystems. In fact, although the number of students enrolled in them rose by 6%, the budget shrank by one percent: from NIS 12,249 billion in NIS 12,124 billion.

In contrast, the (overall) budgets for the two ultra-Orthodox subsystems - independent education and the Ma'ayan HaHinnuch HaTorani stream - increased significantly. However, this increase also failed to keep up with their increase in student numbers: the budget grew from NIS 1.22 billion in 2001 to NIS 1.51 billion in 2008 - a 24% rise, while student enrollment rose by some 38%.²⁰

Inequality in budgeting teaching hours

Erosion of the budget for teaching hours increases inequality in the education system because it means that schools in affluent localities raise the missing funding from parents to enable them to offer a full curriculum. What is less well known is that, even if budgetary erosion increases inequality, on the whole inequality is caused not by erosion, but by the fact that the Ministry of Education simply does not allocate budgets equally to all schools in per student terms.

This situation is far from new. Disparities in teaching hours have existed for years, even though schools with a similar number of students and classes are supposed to receive an equal number of teaching hours. Available data indicate that variations follow two axes: that of Jewish education streams, and that of national priorities.

For about a decade, the Ministry of Education has conducted sample surveys on the distribution of teaching hours and the use made of them at various schools countrywide. The data appear in the Established Posts Audit report which is drawn up for the ministry by an external commercial body. Unfortunately, the report is defined as an internal document and is not accessible to the public (Miriam Recanati, Secretary to the Ministry of Education's Director-General, August 10, 2009). However, a few figures have been published in two documents, both from the beginning of the 21st century, by bodies that had access to the Established Posts Audit report.

The first of these documents is from the Knesset's Research and Information Center (Van Gelder, September 29, 2002). According to this source, in 2001 schools in the state religious stream enjoyed the most generous allocation of per student teaching hours from the Ministry of Education (through the Ministry of Education's educational institutions organization division) as well as from all additional sources (mainly local authorities and parental co-payments) (Van Gelder: 8). One of the explanations for this state of affairs is that the schools in the state religious stream manage to obtain State recognition of classes smaller than the standard class size. It should be remembered that teaching hours are allocated on a class basis. In contrast, at 73% of the figure for the state religious stream schools, schools in the Arab state sector have the lowest allocation of teaching hours, even though their average student numbers are higher and their classes are larger (Van Gelder: 8).

A second reference to the Established Posts Audit report can be found in a 2003 study of elementary education budgeting (Zussman, Pasternak, Mansour, Romanov and Rimon, 2003). The research found that schools entitled to additional teaching hours, being defined as being "in need of special nurturing" - for example schools on Israel's periphery and those in national priority areas - did indeed receive more teaching hours than other schools. Arab schools, which did not enjoy national priority status, received fewer teaching hours than others. The following table gives the number of teaching hours per student for the different streams.

The data in this table are for 2003. A year later, the Ministry of Education began to use a new index for elementary school budgeting, developed by a commission under Shimshon Shoshani. Prior to 2003, schools were allotted additional teaching hours over and above the basic allocation on the grounds of a "school care index." However, the Shoshani Commission proposed putting budgeting on the basis of a "care per student index." Among other things, this care index included residence in a locality on the national priority A list, a criterion which discriminated against Arab students. In 2006, Israel's High Court accepted a petition to change this clause (HC 11163/03). Although a law authorizing the government to set new areas of national priority and benefits for localities was included in the Arrangements Law for 2009-2010, so far no list has been drawn

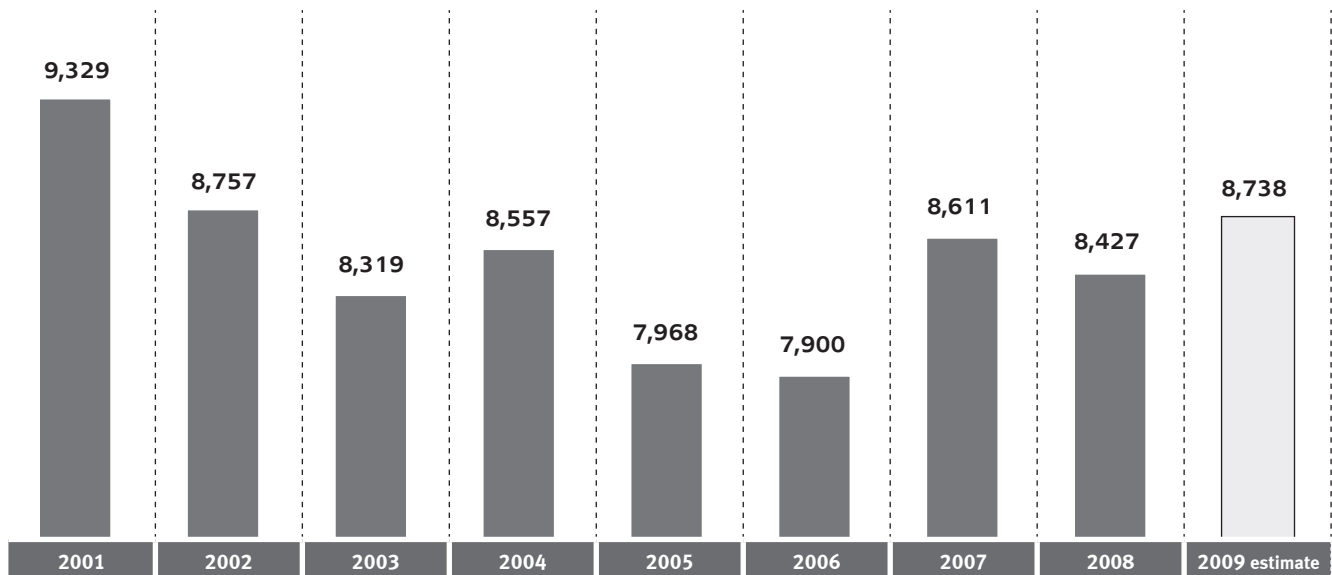
19 Including education in rural localities.

20 Significant growth also occurred in two other elements in the last decade: the special education budget, and the preschool education budget.

Figure 2

Teaching Hours Budget per Student, 2001-2009

All schools, in NIS, constant 2008 prices



Sources: Adva Center analysis of Ministry of Finance, Office of the CFO, *Annual Reports*, various years; Ministry of Finance, *Budget Instructions for Fiscal 2009/2010*, Ministry of Education, August 2009; CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, various years.

up of Arab localities which qualify for benefits under it. In any case it would seem that the new allocation system will not fundamentally change the existing situation, whether because it is to be implemented gradually over a number of years, or because the number of teaching hours earmarked for affirmative action is in any case on the small side (Zussman, Pasternak, Mansour, Romanov and Rimon, 2003:3).

Taken together, the data we have presented produce a picture of unequal budgeting of teaching hours. The inequality results from the Arabs' exclusion from the national priority mechanisms, as well as the fact that the state religious stream has successfully established a norm of smaller classes for its institutions.

Erosion of the development budget

An important component of the education budget is the development budget, which finances class and school construction. The development budget is supposed to meet both the need to deal with the growth in the student population and the need to cope with educational infrastructure wear and tear .

The Ministry of Education development budget has shrunk in the present decade, from NIS 862.9 million in 2001 to just NIS 447.2 million in 2008. The Ministry of Education budget for 2009 and 2010 does not include any real increase in the development budget (see Figure 3 opposite).

Table 17:

Teaching Hours per Student

According to the 2003 Monitoring Report on Teaching Hours

Ma'ayan Torah Education	1.56
Religious State	1.40
Haredi (Independent) Education	1.29
Secular State Education	1.29
Druze Schools	1.23
Bedouin Schools	1.20
Arab Schools	1.16

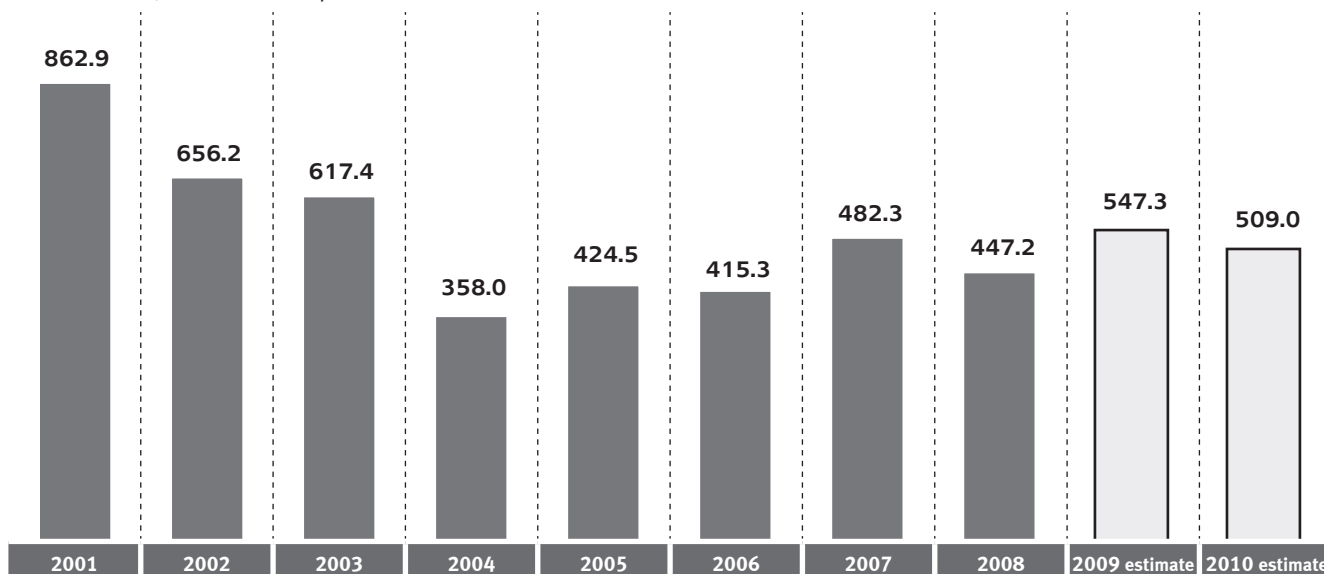
Source: Noam Zussman, Merav Pasternak, Adnan Mansoor, Dmitri Romanov, Ofer Rimon, "The Public Expenditure for Public Elementary Schools, 2003," CBS, Working Paper # 25, 2003, p. 87.

The statutory responsibility for setting up educational institutions lies with the local authorities, while the responsibility for their funding lies with the Ministry of Education (Ben-Elia and Cnaani, 1996). The practical significance of the constant erosion in the Ministry of Education's development budgets is that a local authority wishing to build new educational institutions or expand or renovate existing ones is forced to increasingly use its own resources, or rely on fundraising from other sources. One of the latter is Mifal Hapayis, Israel's National Lottery, which helps all local authorities. Another source is private donations. The problem is that the local authorities also differ

Figure 3

Investment Budget for Education, 2001-2010

In NIS millions, constant 2008 prices



Sources: Adva Center analysis of Ministry of Finance, Office of the CFO, *Annual Reports*, various years; Ministry of Finance, *Budget Instructions for Fiscal 2009/2010*, Ministry of Education, August 2009; CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, various years.

in their ability to solicit and receive donations. Major cities like Tel Aviv and Jerusalem have municipal foundations that specialize in fundraising, but the overwhelming majority of other local authorities lack fundraising capabilities.

Unfortunately, no complete set of uniform data is available about the developmental needs of the education system. One estimate, produced in 1992 by the Harmelech Committee, put the average age of educational buildings at the time at over 25 years (Ben-Elia and Cnaani, 1996). We were not able to find more current estimates, but it may be reasonably assumed that many of these buildings have continued to age and that today we are talking about buildings that are more than 40 years old.

In September 2006, the then education minister, Yuli Tamir, estimated that Israel had a shortfall of some 6,000 classrooms, 1,300 of them in East Jerusalem (Sela, September 4, 2006). Data that the Ministry of Education submitted to the State Comptroller's Office indicate that at the end of 2007, Israel's Arab schools had a shortage of some 1,100 classrooms (excluding both East Jerusalem and the Abu Basma Regional Council) (State Comptroller 2008: 73-102). According to a 2005 estimate, the Bedouin schools in the Negev are 1,250 classrooms short (Vorgan and Lotan, July 17, 2007).

In March 2007, the Israeli government decided to adopt a five-year plan for 2007-2011, involving the construction of 8,000 classrooms, of which 4,370 would be funded by the State budget and 2,950 by the National Lottery. A calculation

we performed on the basis of the figures in the government's decision (Prime Minister's Office, March 18, 2007) shows that the budget of the Ministry of Education five-year plan comes out to be NIS 464 million for each one of the years 2007 and 2008, and in 2009 NIS 534 million. If we assume that the Ministry of Education's development budget is supposed to cover not only the costs of the five-year plan but also of additional projects, then the figures in the development budget as shown in Figure 3 above indicate that during 2007-2009 the amount stipulated in the five-year plan was, indeed, fully allocated.

Despite the above allocations, the money earmarked for the development and maintenance of Israel's educational infrastructure has not keep pace with needs. A dearth of classrooms and teaching spaces has far-reaching implications, not only in terms of equality between the various educational subsystems - above all between Arab and Jewish schools - but also in terms of the education system's ability to cope with organizational and pedagogical innovations. For example, it is frequently noted that the infrastructure problem is the main obstacle to proper implementation of the "New Horizon" plan, which requires classes to be split and work rooms provided for teachers. This is equally true of all aspects of the plans for computerizing schools and integrating children with special needs into regular classes (Wasserman, interview, March 4, 2009).

C. The education budgets of the local authorities

Inequality is also emblematic of the funding of education services by the local authorities in Israel.

The local authorities are partners with the Ministry of Education in running and funding the education system. When it comes to operations, the local authorities are responsible for constructing kindergartens and schools, as well as for providing ancillary services such as transportation, janitors, security personnel, kindergarten teachers' assistants, and truant officers. The local authorities are directly responsible for running secondary school education, a legacy from the period prior to Israel's establishment. The financing of all of this is also handled jointly, through a matching arrangement; the Ministry of Education provides some 75% of the cost and the local authorities the remaining 25%. In practice, the breakdown varies from one locality to another, inter alia according to the local authority's financial capabilities.

In 2007, local authorities in Israel spent a total of NIS 10 billion on educational services. Of this amount, some NIS 7 billion was money the Ministry of Education transferred to them for operating the services listed above: high schools, maintenance

services, truant officers and other ancillary services (Ministry of Education, 2007 Facts and Data: p. 31). The balance – NIS 3 billion – was money from the local authorities' own sources.

In per student terms, the amounts the Ministry of Education transfers to the local authorities are supposed to be equal for all local authorities. In practice, however, this is not the case. For example, for many years the Arab local authorities' expenditure on education was lower than that of the Jewish local authorities. In 1970, for example, Arab local authorities' expenditure on education, calculated on a per capita basis, was just 17% of the average equivalent for Israel's local authorities in aggregate. By 1980, the figure had crept up to 32%. By 1997, the proportion had reached 76% – still significantly lower than the average, but far higher than in previous decades (Razin, 2003:70). For years, one of the reasons for this state of affairs was the government's low share in financing Arab local authorities' education budgets. It should be noted that a significant improvement has occurred: the figure has risen from 17% of the average of Israel's local authorities in aggregate in 1970, to a sum that is 76% of the average in 1997 (Razin, 2003:70).

Even more glaring disparities affect every aspect of local authorities' own contributions. It is well-known that local authorities vary greatly in their ability to acquire resources. The reasons behind this range from uneven distribution of commercial

Special education – budgeting policy undermines the integration program

Prior to 2002, children and young people aged 3-21 who were defined as having "special needs" were assigned to separate educational frameworks - special education schools or special education classes in mainstream schools. This approach followed the spirit of the Special Education Law of 1988, according to which children with special needs could only have these needs met in separate settings. The critics of this approach argued that separation strengthens negative social labeling and makes it more difficult to integrate persons with special needs into society. Over time, an alternative approach has evolved in many countries, advocating the integration of students with special needs in mainstream settings, where they are to be

provided with the extra services that they need. In 2002, the Israel Special Education Law was amended, with the addition of instructions to integrate these students into mainstream classes and provide support through an "integration basket."²¹ However, the amendment has not led to integration, due to insufficient budgeting, as well as the "discovery" of new populations of students with special needs.

It should be noted that in 2009, special needs students constituted 7.4% of the total elementary and secondary education student body, and 3.5% of all the children attending kindergarten in Israel (CBS, May 3, 2009).

Underfunding

From the very outset, the integration program suffered from underfunding. According to the formula used by the Ministry of Education, the population in need totaled 5.4% of all students, while the

CBS reported the figure as 7.4%. In addition, the formula allocated 1.85 weekly integration hours, a figure inconsistent with actual needs. To deal with this gap, it was decided in 2006 to add 1.0-2.7 integration hours – but only for some 6,000 students defined as having major and compound disabilities.

The small budget is inevitably responsible for the limited implementation of the law. It is implemented in kindergartens, elementary school and junior high – but not in high schools. In addition, parents are required to pay out of pocket for additional services to enable their children to function in a regular classroom.²²

Going one step further, the budgetary priority "ladder" of the special education setup is as follows: the largest budget is given to the special education schools, while the next budget down goes to special education classes at regular schools,

and industrial centers and prestigious housing with their attendant high municipal tax yields, through tax collection efficiency or disparate ability to attract private donations and diverse government budgets. Most of Israel's local authorities need special government financing, known as a "balancing grant," in order to provide basic services such as street cleaning. A minority of just 15 authorities (known as the "Forum of 15") have balanced budgets and therefore no need for this grant.

Affluent authorities are able to finance not only their share of the matching arrangement with the government (around 25%, as stated above), but also to add their own resources to finance additional teaching hours, enrichment programs, and a variety of other services. In contrast, there are local authorities that are practically unable to add anything whatsoever, because of the paucity of their own income. In Israel's Arab localities, for example, own income in 1997 was just 31% of the average for Israel's local authorities in aggregate. What is worse is that this situation has persisted for many years: Back in 1970, the level of own income for Israel's Arab localities was also just 31% of the national average (Razin, 2003:70).

All of these figures point to manifest inequality between local authorities with regard to all aspects of local education system financing. Unfortunately, we are unable to present a detailed list of localities arranged by the amounts they spend

Table 18:

Yearly Expenditure on Education of Local Authorities in Israel

per Student, 2006, By Socio-Economic Ranking

Socio-Economic Rank	Education Expenditure per Student
1	150
2	759
3	629
4	1,838
5	2,665
6	2,065
7	2,530
8	4,180
9	3,389
10	2,371

Source: Avi Ben-Bassat and Momi Dahan, editors, *The Political Economy of Local Governments*, 2009, p. 28.

on education. The reason is that there is no uniformity regarding the address to which the Ministry of Education sends its matching arrangement contribution. In principle, every sum is supposed to be transferred to the local authorities; in practice, when one of the educational institutions in a local authority is

and the lowest budget of all is allotted to the integration program. This structure encourages preference for placing students in separate classes and schools over mainstreaming them in regular classes. The upshot is to thwart the possibility of integrating as more students into regular education.

"Discovery" of a new special needs population

Not only is the Integration Law inadequately funded; in addition, with the introduction of the integration policy, students were "discovered" who had not previously attended special education settings and most of whom had only minor disabilities (attention deficit problems or minor learning disorders such as dyslexia). In 2008, their number was around 80,000 (Vorgan, May 2007; Ruth Penn, February 13, 2008). It appears that in practice, these students make up the

majority of youngsters with special needs presently integrated in regular classes. Thus, instead of bringing about the closing of special facilities and the integration of students with serious disabilities, the Integration Law has led to the diversion of budgets to students who, until the change in the law, were not defined as having special needs.

In addition to the students attending regular classes, there are also students who continue to attend separate special education schools and separate special education classes in regular schools. In 2002, before the application of the Integration Law, their number was 39,015; by 2008, it had swelled to 54,593.

Special education as a means of tracking

In addition to the above, special education frameworks are used not only to assist children who have special

needs, but also to track students from weak social groups. CBS statistics show that the percentage of children in special education who come from the Ethiopian community and whose parents were born in Israel, is twice as high as their percentage in the general population. The data also show that students' chances of being placed in a special education setting correlate inversely with their parents' educational and income levels (CBS, May 3, 2009).

21 The reference is to such services as remedial teaching, art therapy, and technical aids to learning such as audio recordings and personal aides.

22 In 2004, Israel's High Court ruled that integration was suffering from underfunding and required the State to increase the budget (H.C. 6973/03, Marciano vs. Ministry of Finance). In the wake of this ruling, additional allocations were made of amounts which still do not meet existing needs. According to a Ministry of Education estimate, the complete implementation of integration of students with special needs at both the high school and kindergarten levels, in the present (inadequate) allocation format, would require an additional budget of NIS 450 million (Vorgan 2007:4).

run by an external body – for example, the ORT or Ma’ayan Ha-Hinuch HaTorani networks – the Ministry of Education transfers the money directly to the institution rather than to the local authority. In addition, from analyses of CBS statistics and figures collected by the Union of Local Authorities in Israel, it emerges that there are no uniform rules for transferring funds. In some local authorities the money is transferred directly to the institution or network that runs it, while in others the money is given to the local authority, which, in turn, passes it on to the educational institution.

In 2009, researchers Avi Ben Bassat and Momi Dahan published a similar analysis to the one we have tried to produce, for local budgetary expenditure per student, based on Ministry of Education files. For analysis purposes they related only to institutions run by the local authorities and only to students studying at institutions run by the local authorities. As indicated above, we found that there are authorities that receive from the Ministry of Education both budgets intended for financing the institutions they run and budgets for institutions run by another body. Ben Bassat and Dahan examined overall local budgetary expenditure – including funds that the local authorities received from the Ministry of Education in the framework of matching funding, and money raised by the local authorities themselves. They then grouped the local authorities by socio-economic clusters, and found that in 2006, local authorities in the highest socio-economic cluster spent NIS 2,371 per student – a sum 16 times higher than that spent by the lowest socio-economic cluster (Ben Bassat and Dahan, 2009: 28). These data speak eloquently of the education budgeting disparities between the different localities in Israel.

D. Parental co-payments

Households are the third important source of funding for Israel’s national expenditure on education, after the Ministry of Education and the local authorities.

As shown at the beginning of this chapter, household contributions to funding the national expenditure on education (excluding universities and institutes of higher learning) have risen from 18% in 1995 to 20% in 2005. This increase is both the upshot of the erosion in the Ministry of Education budget, resulting in pressure on households to contribute from their own pockets to fund everyday school operations, and the result of the emergence of a “private market” in the education system, encouraging the creation of expensive “educational products,” from “special” kindergartens and elementary schools through prestigious study tracks at high school. As we saw in the first chapter, all of these are the product of the entry into the education system of “market forces” that erode the status of public education services, while also expanding the field in which private education services operate.

Household expenditure on education comprises a range of items. Among other things, households pay for children’s afternoon activities and private lessons, as well as for school equipment. A particularly important item is parental co-payments at schools. We will focus on these payments below.

There are no uniform figures on parental co-payments. The main source is a household expenditure survey that the CBS conducts every year. According to figures we received from the CBS, based on the survey carried out in 2007 - the last full annual survey available – one finds major disparities in household expenditures per child. For a child in pre-elementary education (preschool), a household in the top income quintile spends a sum that is four times higher than its counterpart in the lowest quintile; for a child in elementary education, 1.8 times higher; for a child in junior high, 3.5 times higher; and for a child in enrolled in an academic high school, 3.8 times higher. Although these are extremely significant differences, information in the media about the sums that parents pay for special schools would seem to cast doubt on the figures – the impression is that the differences are even greater.

Central Bureau of Statistics Survey of Private Inputs

Another source of information about parental co-payments is a one-time private inputs survey conducted by the CBS in 2001. The CBS contacted school principals and asked them to report on the monies they received from a variety of sources in addition to the basic budget they received from the Ministry of Education and the local authorities. We will refer below to these monies as “additional income.” They constitute income earmarked to cover various expenditures, from enrichment

Table 19

Average Monthly Household Expenditure on Education

per Child, by Quintile, 2007, By net income per standard person, in NIS, current prices

Type of School	Total	1	2	3	4	5
Preschool	161	86	139	136	319	356
Elementary school	100	76	118	101	119	136
Junior High School	110	56	108	132	164	198
Academic High School	157	92	157	151	223	257
Vocational or Agricultural High School	173	138	137	250	227	18
Total	331	149	267	352	530	684

Source: Data provided by CBS, August 2009.

classes through special study programs. On the basis of the survey findings, the CBS estimated that this expenditure was around NIS 3.8 billion in 2001 – some 18.5% of total current expenditure for elementary and secondary education (CBS, April 2006:3, in 2001 prices). The survey revealed that about half of this expenditure was funded by public bodies (the Ministry of Education and the local authorities), while the private sector (households, commercial bodies and non-governmental nonprofit organizations) funded the other half (CBS, April 2006:3).

The survey also indicated that in 2001, on average, schools in Israel received additional funding totaling NIS 2,897 per student. The extent of the inequality in the system is illustrated by the fact that at Israel's Jewish schools this amount averaged NIS 3,484, while in Arab education it was only NIS 985. Another disparity exists between state secular schools, where the figure was recorded as NIS 3,439 per student, and state religious schools, where the corresponding figure was NIS 2,750. The highest figure found was at ultra-Orthodox schools (excluding boarding schools) – NIS 4,553 per student (CBS, April 2006:5).²³

Another finding of the survey was that in the Jewish sector, compared with schools that serve the middle and bottom income deciles, schools with students from the top deciles not only manage to raise more “additional income” from private sources generally and their students’ parents specifically, but are also able to raise “additional income” from public sources – the Ministry of Education and the local authorities (CBS, April

2006: Table 3).

In contrast, in Arab schools serving the lowest decile, “additional income” for schools with students from the bottom income deciles largely came from public sources. It may be reasonably assumed that these were the Ministry of Education's funds allocated to less well-off students (CBS, April 2006: Table 3).

The increasing importance of parental co-payments is indicated by the fact that in the whole of Israel, income from these payments constituted 58.6% of the sources of private financing for the schools surveyed in 2001 (CBS, April 2006: 8). Almost all schools (89%) reported that some of their “additional income” came from monies from parents. In contrast, just 21.3% reported that they received private donations (CBS, April 2006: Table 11).

What was this “additional income” used for? The survey data show that the greater part was spent on teachers’ salaries and in-service training. The second largest amount financed extra study programs and CRB (Karev) Foundation activities (CBS, April 2006: Table 16).

Unfortunately, the CBS decided not to publish the private inputs survey. There were two primary reasons for this decision. One was the relatively low response rate to the survey, particularly among the ultra-Orthodox and Arab schools; the other was that for the ultra-Orthodox schools, it was difficult to separate the income coming from various sources, which resulted in particularly high income figures. There was no follow-up to the survey.

What is the total amount paid by parents in Israel?

Although parental co-payments began ballooning a generation ago, at the time of writing there are no complete, consistent and accepted figures. The main body responsible for collecting

23 There were a number of reasons for the highest figure being recorded for the ultra-Orthodox schools. Firstly, it became clear that some of the principals of the ultra-Orthodox institutions also included teachers' salaries in “additional income.” The principals of the state schools could not do this because their teachers receive their salaries directly from the Ministry of Education (in elementary and junior high education), or from the local authorities. Secondly, the ultra-Orthodox schools received “additional income” not only from the Ministry of Education but also from the Religious Affairs Ministry (at a particularly high level for secondary institutions) and the Ministry of Labor (CBS, April 2006, Table 5). Thirdly, ultra-Orthodox institutions have relatively small student numbers, making “additional income” high in per student terms (CBS, April 2006, Table 9).

and publishing such data is the Central Bureau of Statistics, which has three different sources of relevant data. However, there is no uniformity here with regard to institutions covered, dates and the size of the amount, even though the differences between them are not great. Data from the three sources are shown in Table 20.

In addition to these CBS calculations, we also have information from the Union of Local Authorities in Israel, based on the reports of the local authority education departments. According to this estimate, in 2006 parental co-payments totaled NIS 3.3 billion (Tsadik, 2006).

What emerges from all of these calculations is that parents in Israel add a great deal from their own pockets to finance the education system, although the precise amount is unknown. As we have stressed, this figure has become an important element in making unequal resources even more unequal between the country's different schools (Nir and Miran, 2006, Nir and Miran, 2007; Tsadik and Schwartz, 2009).

The economist Ruth Klinov reported in 2007 that according to OECD data, parental co-payments at Israeli elementary schools financed 6.5% of these schools' total direct expenditures, while in the OECD countries the average was lower, at 5% (Klinov, January 19, 2007). Klinov also found that while parental co-payments in OECD countries are used for extra-curricular activities, in Israel they are also used to finance basic teaching (Klinov, January 19, 2007).

Parental co-payments - What are they paying for? How much does it cost?

Israeli legislation (Compulsory Education Law 1949 and State Education Law 1953) mandates a right to free education up to the age of 16, at state schools. However, the exemption from payment applies only to registration fees and tuition, and in practice parents bear the burden of many additional payments. Some of these are included in an annual charge set by the Ministry of Education with the approval of the Knesset Education Committee. Others are charged in the absence of any such approval.

The charge approved by the Knesset Education Committee includes **obligatory payments** (for accident insurance and dental health) as well as **optional payments** (cultural basket, excursions, parties and enrichment lessons) up to a ceiling set by the committee. In addition there is a payment for the "**voluntary acquisition of services**" (enrichment supplement, scholastic reinforcement, special projects such as producing a school newspaper). There is no upper limit to this payment, and it is conditional on the approval of the parents and the school inspector.

Parents are entitled not to make the optional payments,

but in this case their children will not take part in the activities that are subject to charge. Given the frequent cutbacks to the education budget, parents are under great pressure to pay out these optional payments, by way of offsetting the cuts.²⁴

It should be noted that parental co-payments are a form of **regressive tax**: the payment is not linked to income levels or the number of children at school, and hence it constitutes a particularly heavy burden for middle and low-income families.²⁵

What are the parents paying the school for?

a) Payments approved by the Knesset Education Committee

1. Obligatory payments for personal accident insurance and dental health services: In 2009-2010 these payments were set at NIS 64.

2. Payments for school lunches: At those institutions where students are fed, parents also pay for food. The payment is based on parental income. The maximum payment per student is around NIS 750 a year (as per the 2007-2008 school year).

3. Optional payments to finance enrichment activities: External enrichment programs (e.g. CRB (Karev) Foundation), excursions, end-of-year parties, 10th/11th/12th grade graduation album, and school trips. For 2009-2010, these payments were set at NIS 220 per child for kindergarten, NIS 500-870 per student in elementary school, NIS 840-1,000 per student in junior high, and NIS 1,000-1,300 per student in high school.

4. One-time optional payments for "centralized" equipment purchase: For books, exercise books, laboratory equipment and the like. Many schools also charge parents for the purchase of equipment for which the local authority is responsible: installing air conditioners, buying computers, photocopying worksheets. In 2009, the maximum amount schools were allowed to charge parents was NIS 125 for kindergarten, NIS 250 for elementary school, and NIS 450 for secondary school.

24 The Ministry of Education has a fund for assisting needy families with parental co-payments. In 2008, the fund had a budget of NIS 43 million. The assistance fund is not taken full advantage of, for a number of reasons: many parents are unaware of its existence, the fund's monies can only cover a small portion of the total cost of the charge, and scholarships are only granted in the second half of the school year. In addition, the eligibility criteria lack transparency, and to receive assistance families must reveal their financial hardships to the school, which is a factor that puts many parents off (Vorgan, May 24, 2009:12).

25 In recent years, there has been growing criticism of the size of parental co-payments. MK Yuli Tamir, former education minister, suggested introducing a special education services tax, to be collected through the National Insurance Institute, taking into account the family's economic situation, number of children attending school, and the stage of their studies. This is a problematic suggestion: firstly, it involves a degree of acceptance of the de facto erosion of the principle of free state education as well as of the institutionalization of parental payments as an supplementary financing mechanism; secondly, it is to be feared that the institutionalization of this practice will speed up the trend of the last two decades of reduced public education expenditure and increased private expenditure. In our opinion, the proper way to fund the education system is through income tax, both personal and corporate. The problem is that the policy that has dominated the last decade is based on reducing income and corporate tax rates.

Table 20

Parental Payments: Three Sources from the Central Bureau of Statistics

In NIS billions, current prices

	Inputs Survey	Department of National Accounts	Survey of Household Expenditures
Year of data	2001	2005	2007
Schools involved	Elementary, Junior and High Schools	Preschools, Elementary and Junior/High Schools	Preschools, Elementary and Academic High Schools
Amount - NIS billions – in current prices	1.9	1.7	2.2
Amount – NIS billions – in constant 2008 prices	2.2	1.9	2.3

Source: Adva Center analysis of CBS, Survey of Inputs into the Education System, 2001, April 2006; Unpublished data provided by the CBS.

The last two items are not obligatory, but school parents' committees bring major pressure to bear on parents who do not pay up. According to Ministry of Education guidelines, if the activity which is financed by parents' payments takes place during the school day, all students must be allowed to take part in it; if it takes place after school hours, a student whose parents do not pay may be prevented from taking part. In practice, the implementation of these guidelines varies from school to school.

b) Payments not approved by the Knesset Education Committee

In addition to the payments approved by the Knesset Education Committee, schools often charge additional amounts, as below:

1. Payment to the class parents' committee: The amount of NIS 150 per student for social activities, gifts for teachers and the like.

2. Payment for specialized studies: Many high schools charge money for equipment for specialized studies, such as art and sciences. In the case of some specialized studies, these charges can amount to thousands of shekels per student. The responsibility for overseeing such payments lies with the subject inspectors, who intervene only when they receive complaints about anomalies.

3. Payment for employing teaching personnel: Under the self-administration policy, schools charge parents for employing teachers and helpers through municipal associations. The money is used to split classes, prepare for matriculation examinations, and provide reinforcement in basic subjects.

4. Tuition at recognized schools that are not official: This category includes special schools, networks such as "Noam" at the religious state school network, experimental schools, and church schools. At all of these institutions, which are defined

as "recognized schools that are not official," tuition may be charged in addition to monies collected by other schools. Tuition is likely to be between NIS 1,000 and NIS 2,500 per month per student.

5. Other payments: Parents are sometimes required to also finance other expenses, including the purchase of equipment that the local authorities are unable to fund, such as air conditioners. Other such items may include a memorial Holocaust trip to Poland.

How much does each family pay?

Once a year the Knesset Education Committee approves the maximum authorized amount for payments that may be required of parents. The figures vary depending on the child's grade. For example, in the school year beginning September 2009, elementary schools can require parents of a 6th grader to pay NIS 1,509 (obligatory and optional payments, payments for three hours of additional school programs and payment for centralized purchase of services and personal equipment). The parents of a 12th grader can be required to pay the sum of up to NIS 2,212 per year for the same items (Vorgan, May 24, 2009).

In practice, many schools charge parents significantly larger sums. An annual audit report covering a sample of schools, produced for the Ministry of Education in 2008 by a commercial company, showed that the average payment required of 10th to 12th graders was NIS 5,618 a year, and NIS 4,318 annually for 7th to 9th graders (Vorgan, May 24, 2009). These figures are twice as high as the amount approved by the Knesset Education Committee.

On the other hand, some 35% of parents do not pay the full amount required for voluntary payments as approved by the Knesset Education Committee. Of them, 16% do not pay anything, and 19% pay only part of the required sum (Vorgan, May 24, 2009).

Who knows what a school budget amounts to?

Even the Ministry of Finance complains that “today it is hard to understand from the Ministry of Education how much every school receives each year” (Goldenberg, August 13, 2009).

The school budget is not transparent, first and foremost because most of the monies that the Ministry of Education and the local authorities allocate to a given school is paid, not in cash, but in teaching hours. On the basis of the number of weekly study hours for a regular class and the number of classes, a school receives a number of hours of instruction that is sufficient to teach all the study hours for all classes. The hours of instruction are called “teaching hours” (or alternatively WH, weekly teaching hours for the entire year). The Ministry of Education sets the basic criteria: number of study hours a week, number of study hours for each subject, and the number of students in a class. For its part, once it knows how many WHs it has received, the school employs the appropriate number of teachers to meet its needs for each subject.

So far, everything is simple, but from now on things get more complicated.

1. The first and primary reason for the complexity of this issue lies in the fact that teachers’ personal data vary – education, seniority, or amount of accredited in-service training. As a result, they each earn a different salary. One hundred teaching hours at a school whose teachers have considerable seniority and advanced academic degrees will cost more

money than one hundred teaching hours at a school where the teachers are rookies with less education. This fact does not, of course, in any way predict the quality of the teaching at each of these establishments: it simply means that the budgets will differ.

2. The second reason lies in the fact that the salary budget for each school is unknown because the teachers’ wages are paid directly into every teacher’s bank account, whether by the Ministry of Education (elementary school) or by the local authorities (high school).

3. The third reason lies in the fact that teaching hours are not the only hours of instruction that exist in the education system’s “hours market.” Schools can “recruit” additional hours of instruction for themselves from one or more of the sources described below.

First of all, the Ministry of Education itself allocates additional hours of instruction intended to help schools situated in localities with a low socio-economic rating, or schools with an intake of a number of students from weak socio-economic backgrounds. This allocation of hours is on the basis of a socio-economic neediness index known as the “care index.” The extent of the need for care is determined nowadays by the so-called Strauss Care Index, named after the chief scientist of the Ministry of Education, Sydney Strauss. The index comprises four components: education of the most educated parent (weight of component

in the index – 40%); peripherality of the locality (20%); economic status of the locality (20%); combination of country of birth and country-in-distress status (20%) (Ministry of Finance, *Proposed Budget for the 2009 Financial Year and Explanatory Notes*, Ministry of Education: 127).

Secondly, the Ministry of Education allocates schools not only “care hours” but also other additional hours: additional hours according to preferential baskets – for example, for localities on the confrontation line or those included in Project Renewal; additional hours through the CRB (Karev) Foundation or through Sherut Leumi (National Civilian Service, in lieu of military service), female soldier-teachers, students on the Perach tutoring and mentoring scheme, and additional hours for Torah studies (in state religious schools) (Van Gelder, September 29, 2002: 11).

Thirdly, it is not only the Ministry of Education that allocates additional teaching hours: so do affluent local authorities. The number of these hours varies from one locality to another, from one school to another, and from one year to the next. There is no body that has centralized information on the number of authorities that do so, or on the total number of hours. Nor is it possible to know what the Ministry of Education’s contribution is to the education budgets of the various local authorities. The reason for this is that in some authorities, the ministry transfers its share of school funding to the local authority only, whereas in others, it trans-

fers funds directly to school networks (for example, ORT, Amal, and the ultra-Orthodox networks). In addition, “due to different budgetary structures, it is difficult to obtain clear-cut figures about the degree to which the local authorities contribute to education budgets and the distribution of money for different uses” (Dovrat Commission, 2005:206, Section 9.6.3 of the report).

Fourthly, those schools that do manage to collect money from parents, donors and businesses use some of these funds for additional hours of instruction. There is no body that collects information on the extent of this phenomenon.

The Ministry of Education does not collect systematic and consistent data about aggregate payments that parents are required to pay to schools. As mentioned above, the private inputs survey conducted by the CBS in 2001 was shelved and there has been no follow-up.

4. The fourth reason for the complexity of the situation is the fact that the school budget comprises not only hours of instruction, but also a variety of services such as secretarial, maintenance, security, libraries, laboratories, and clinics. Funding for these services comes both from the Ministry of Education (the lion’s share) and the local authority. Some, such as secretarial services, are to be found in every school, while others, such as libraries or laboratories, are only to be found in some schools. In order to receive Ministry of Education funds for the salary

of a laboratory assistant or librarian, first a library or laboratory must be set up. Given the fact that the Ministry of Education’s development budgets are in constant decline, the schools that receive such funding are the ones that are able to finance the setting up of the library or laboratory from their own sources.

The bottom line is that school financing in Israel comes from a variety of sources and that information about them is extremely decentralized. No state agency has complete information about school budgets.

This state of affairs requires school principals to become “hunters of hours,” forced to trudge from one government ministry to another and from one inspector to another, looking for additional hours. It may reasonably be assumed that the most successful “hunters” are the principals of schools in affluent cities and neighborhoods in Israel’s central district, who have good connections with the educational establishment and are equipped with up-to-date “maps” to a range of sources. It may also be reasonably assumed that the political affiliation of the heads of the various subsystems also makes a difference: the fact that during the 1977-2001 period the Ministry of Education had far more ministers and directors-general belonging to the National Religious Party (NRP) than from any other party apparently brought about a situation where schools from the state religious stream enjoyed the largest num-

ber of teaching hours per student.

The fact that school principals must themselves raise additional resources has recently led to the growth of a new economic sector – economic consultancy for educational institutions. In some instances, these consultants are people who were formerly employed in the education system, where they became familiar with its ins and outs (examples include the Kabiri-Nevo-Keidar law firm, the Netiv economic consultancy company, and Shahaf Financial Accounting Services).

The Dovrat Commission tackled the issue of school budgeting, and it came up with a practical suggestion: to pool all financing sources in a “services basket,” to include the costs of teachers’ salaries, administration, and ancillary services (janitors, security personnel and like) (Dovrat, January 2005:185). In addition, the Dovrat Commission suggested transferring most (specifically, 87%) of the education budget directly to schools (Dovrat, January 2005:184), in the spirit of a “self-management” policy.

The Dovrat Commission also suggested that school budgeting should be done on a differential basis, whereby schools serving low-income families would receive a larger budget than schools serving well-off families. This was a noteworthy recommendation as part of a comprehensive nationwide process designed to come to grips with the major disparities that characterize the system today.

VIII. Conclusions

In Israel, the dynamics of separation and inequality have created an education system that is divided and split along lines of class, ethnicity and degree of religiosity. This is a system lacking a uniform curriculum common to all. It is also a system that channels students to different study streams and consequently to different levels of achievement and completion points.

Over the last decade, education has hit the headlines. The reasons for this state of affairs range from Israeli students' low achievements in international tests, through attempts to achieve a "core curriculum," to court cases involving ethnic or class discrimination. However, education is still a long way from regaining the status it once had in Israel's national priorities. The best proof of this is that the Dovrat Commission's recommendations have never been fully implemented because the very same government that warmly adopted them was not prepared to provide even a significant part of the necessary funding for their implementation.

The Dovrat Commission's recommendations also demonstrate the analytical inadequacy emblematic of a good part of public attitudes to the problems of Israel's education system. The committee believed that the main adjustments needed were organizational and administrative, as if the education system was a business corporation whose new owners wished to improve its performance by slashing its costs and making its systems more flexible. This was the reason for the major emphasis placed on the devolution of authority, administrative flexibility and school autonomy. Although the task force demonstrated considerable awareness of the issues of separation and inequality, its recommendations, focusing as they did on management issues, threatened to further increase separation

and inequality.

The picture we have tried to present in this document indicates that this is a political issue that needs to be dealt with on the very highest national level, a subject of importance equal to defense and macro-economic policy. If we want to achieve genuine change, education needs to become one of the three topics heading government priorities – side by side with defense and the economy. Just as the prime minister directs defense policy and macro-economic policy, despite the fact that the government has a minister of defense and a minister of finance, so too education policy needs to be directed by the highest office of State.²⁶

The reason for this is that the key issues in the education sphere are not pedagogical in nature, but rather political. Tackling the issue of state/ultra-Orthodox separation requires negotiations on prime ministerial level. It is the prime minister who will have to re-examine the old status quo agreements; putting an end to the exclusion and discrimination of Arab education requires decision-making on the level of the prime minister, because this involves bringing about a new equilibrium between Israel's defense needs and its education needs.

The emphasis placed here on the need for active direction from the head of State in no way obviates the need for a ministry of education capable of controlling the system. Here, too,

²⁶ In many countries the education reform process is considered sufficiently important to justify the in-depth involvement of the country's head. At the same time, such involvement in and of itself is not sufficient to guarantee change along the right lines: the reform instituted by US President George W. Bush under the name *No Child Left Behind* is characterized by many features taken from corporate culture and intended to increase the system's productivity and output, even when not necessarily accompanied by an improvement in the pedagogical functioning of schools (Sadovnik, Dworkin, Gamoran, Hallinan, and Scott, 2008).

we have good examples in the shape of the defense and finance ministries, two supremely important ministries where the figure who directs their activities on the highest level is the prime minister.

The privatization and devolution trends that began in the mid-1980s have led to what can only be described as the “meltdown” of the Ministry of Education’s ability to both control and regulate the system – so much so that it is incapable of acting as a counterweight to the “market forces” presently at work in the system. A number of the key committees that have examined the education system, first and foremost the Dovrat Commission, were guided by an unfounded premise: that the education system can be privatized and decentralized, and the education ministry can busy itself with regulation. The fact is that the ministry’s ability to regulate went into meltdown together with its ability to guide the system.

The education budget needs to grow, and this growth must be differential, so that schools on the educational periphery enjoy a larger budget than the norm for at least ten years, while the standard budget must be on the same level as is today enjoyed only by affluent schools, thanks to their ability to fundraise from a large number of sources – the Ministry of Education, parental co-payments, private donations, and local authority funds. Increasing the education budget must, as we have stated, be based on a new equilibrium between the defense and education budgets.

On a school and classroom level, the change needed is in teaching policy. Since 1960, the prevailing policy has been to create homogeneous groups of students, dividing them into groups and tracks, not to say removing them from regular to

special education. This division has taken place behind the ideological mask of “integration,” in the practical form of placing students under one and the same roof – but in separate tracks.

This policy must be replaced with one where teaching and studying take place in heterogeneous groups. This, it must be remembered, was the intention of those educators behind the implementation of the 1960s integration policy. However, this intention was not put into practice, since at the time the Ministry of Education did not allocate the resources needed for training teachers to provide instruction in heterogeneous classes. Moreover, here too importance attaches to the political elite backing the policy of heterogeneous instruction, which in the politico-national sphere is tantamount to a shared destiny on the part of the diverse groups in Israeli society. Today, when the Ministry of Education has lost a large measure of its ability to control the system, and “market forces” are constantly at work in an attempt to bring about class homogeneity, the not so covert message from the political leadership is one of separation, behind an ideological mask of “excellence.” This message must be replaced by one of solidarity.

Lastly, the political leadership needs to support the country’s teachers, and the dominant message must be: the teachers as a body need not be changed – what needs to be changed are teaching conditions. Higher salaries, personal corners in which to work, splitting large classes into smaller ones and fostering the sense of challenge and vocation that characterizes people in hi-tech today can benefit the country’s teachers and enable them to be at the cutting edge of a process to improve and upgrade Israel’s education system.

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