

THE ISRAEL Equality Monitor



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EDUCATION IN ISRAEL

Major Dimensions of Inequality

In Israel, the state provides education, which is compulsory from age 5-15 and tuition-free through grade 12. In August 1949, a year after the establishment of the state, the Knesset passed the Compulsory Education Law, which states that "the government is responsible for providing free, compulsory education" for children aged 5-13; in 1968 the age of compulsory education was extended to 15, and in 1978, the age of free education was extended to 17.

Elementary education, as well as a good part of high school education, is public. Through the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs, the government accredits schools, determines curriculum, certifies teachers and supervises their work, awards diplomas, and finances most of

the expenses of education. Local governments are responsible for setting up and maintaining educational facilities; their funding comes from local taxes and from transfers from the Ministry.

While the government is by far the largest supplier of educational services, not all sectors of the population receive the same quality service; there are considerable disparities in the educational achievements of the direct consumers of these services – the schoolchildren.

Despite the universalistic spirit of the Compulsory Education Law, the Israeli educational system is characterized by a high degree of internal differentiation. One dividing line was drawn by the State Education Law (1953), which acknowledged three types of Jewish ▶

From the Editorial Board

Over the last two decades, Israeli society has been undergoing a process marked by increasing inequality. The notions of equality of opportunity and social justice, once cornerstones of social thought and policy in Israel, are being jettisoned. Wage scales now resemble those in many Third World societies. Contrary to expectation and popular myth, second and third generation Mizrahim – Jews of Middle Eastern origin – lag further behind their Ashkenazi – Jews of European or American origin – cohorts in educational achievements, employment opportunities and housing than the first generation.

Women earn less, compared to men, than they did a decade ago, and their political representation is declining. Palestinian citizens of Israel are employed mainly in blue collar jobs, regardless of their educational achievements. Palestinians from the occupied territories receive the lowest remuneration, and they are not protected by Israeli labor unions. The editors of *The Israel Equality Monitor* aspire to put the idea of equality of opportunity back on the national agenda. They will present an up-to-date picture of the state of equality in various areas of social life. The figures will be presented as clearly as possible, so as to make them accessible to lay readers.

The Israel Equality Monitor will present comparisons between various social groups in Israeli society, as well as between the past and the present situation and between Israel and other societies – neighboring ones as well as those across the sea.

The Israel Equality Monitor is designed for the use of concerned citizens, policy makers, and activists striving to promote the ideas of equality of opportunity and social justice in Israel.

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schools: secular ("public") schools, religious ("religious public") schools, and Orthodox parochial schools ("private education"). The law granted each a separate administrative apparatus, thus perpetuating the divisions prevailing during the British Mandatory Government. A second line of demarcation is between Jewish and Arab schools. This separation is not a legislated one, but rather reflects a decision to preserve the divisions that existed during the Mandate period; prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, the majority of Arab schoolchildren studied in schools set up by the the British Mandatory Government, and the Jews studied in a private system administered by the Educational Committee of the National Assembly, the self-governing body of the pre-state Jewish community in Palestine. A third principle of division within Jewish schools, one that traverses all three sub-systems, is that between "regular" pupils, most of whom are Ashkenazim, and pupils defined as "in need of special nurturing," most of whom are Mizrahim. This distinction is not based on law, neither is it reflected in separate administrative divisions. Its origin can be traced to educational policies that go back to the 1960s, the intent of which was to improve the educational achievements of children of immigrants from

Arab lands. In fact, however, it created and perpetuated a distinct category of disadvantaged pupils. Another dimension that cuts through ethnic, national and religious divisions, one that does not find expression in official designations of the various educational frameworks, is that of class. Schools for "the disadvantaged" have many characteristics in common with what in North America and Europe are known as working-class schools. The same is true for Arab schools, most of whose pupils come from working-class families. The main lines of demarcation, then, are national class-based and ethnic class-based, and they form three distinct groups: an Ashkenazi upper and middle class, whose children attend high-quality or regular schools, whether they are secular public, religious public or Orthodox; a lower-middle and lower Mizrahi class, a good part of whose children attend schools for the disadvantaged; and an Arab lower-middle and lower class, most of whose children study in Arab schools. The Israeli educational system does not bring members of the above groups together until the later stages of their education. Jews and Arabs meet for the first time at the university, and the same is true for secular and religious Jews. Mizrahim and Ashkenazim meet under

one roof in junior high school. However, although Mizrahi pupils may study under the same roof as their Ashkenazi cohorts, most follow different tracks. **The general rule is that separation goes hand in hand with inequality.** The best schools and the highest achievements are those of the minority – members of the Ashkenazi upper and middle classes, regardless of whether they are secular or religiously observant. At the other pole are the schools and achievements of the majority of schoolchildren, members of the Mizrahi and Arab lower-middle and lower classes. Within each of these groups there is a clear dividing line between females and males. Usually this distinction is reflected in study content; for example, in academic high schools, more girls major in humanities and more boys in the physical sciences. In vocational high schools, carpentry and mechanics are the exclusive domain of boys, while secretarial courses and fashion are reserved for girls. Moreover, in several Muslim and Druze villages, as well as among Orthodox Jews, the division is physical as well as curricular; that is, females and males study in separate classrooms or in separate schools, and this separation fosters gender inequalities reflected in high school and university attendance. ■

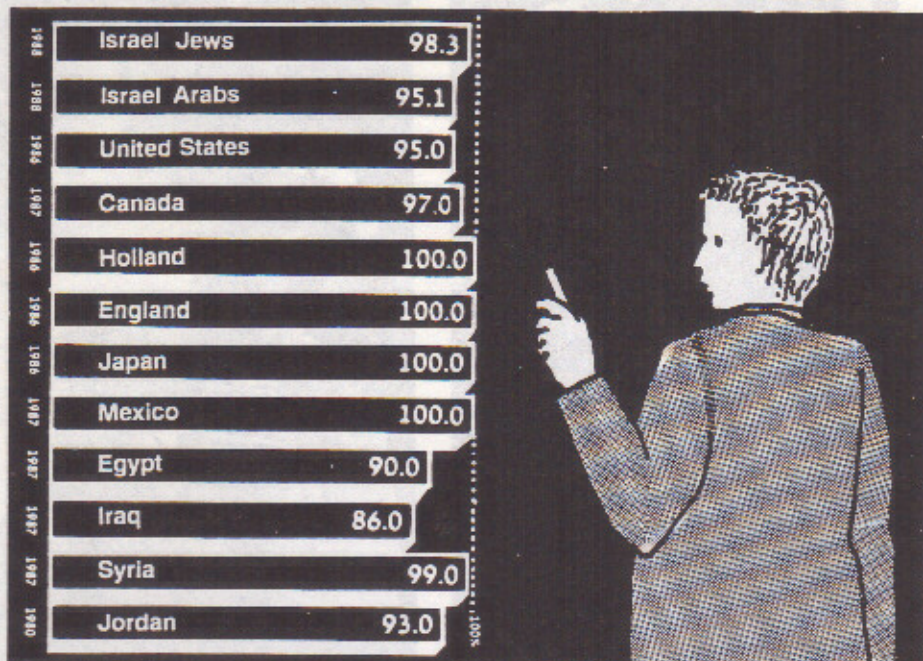


Elementary Schools: 2-year Gaps



In Israel, elementary school attendance is generally high – similar to that of First World countries.

Elementary School Attendance Rates for Selected Countries, in Percentages



Sources: CBS, 1990 Statistical Abstracts of Israel, Tables 22.12 and 22.13; UNESCO, 1989, Statistical Yearbook, Paris, Table 3.2. Note: The figures for Israel are for the 6-13 age group.



While the overall attendance rate is high, there are variations among the different population groups. The school attendance of Christian Arabs is slightly higher than that of Jews; the rate for Muslims, on the other hand, is lower, as the table below shows. Arab schools evince a high drop-out rate towards the end of elementary school. A 1985 government report

School Attendance, By Religion, Ages 6-13, in Percentages

Christians	98.6
Jews	98.3
Druze	97.9
Muslims	94.4

Source: CBS, 1990 Statistical Abstract of Israel, Tables 22.12 and 22.13

found that at least 20% of the pupils enrolled in first grade had dropped out by the end of elementary school.¹

Regular Schools and Schools for "Disadvantaged" Children

The differences between these two types of schools go back to the 1950s and 1960s, when it was discovered that children of immigrants from Arab lands performed poorly in the national "seker" examinations, the purpose of which was to determine which pupils should receive high school scholarships. (At the time, education was free up to age 13 only.) In 1957, only 46% of the pupils whose parents had come from Asia and Africa passed the exam, the majority with the lowest passing marks. In contrast, 81% of children whose parents had come from Europe or America passed, the majority of them with a mark of 80 or above.² Among the fac-

tors that contributed to the low success rate of Mizrahi schoolchildren were a shortage of teachers in their neighborhoods; the teachers' lack of qualifications; the dearth of teaching facilities; a curriculum whose content was foreign to the children; the rejection, on the part of the educational system, of the cultural background of the immigrants, including the Arabic language and Arab culture; and the alienation between the parents and the school system.³

When educators realized that very few Mizrahi youngsters were attending high school, the Ministry of Education initiated a program designed to improve their performance. This program, which came to be known as "the policy of special nurturing," resulted in the creation of a separate category of schoolchildren "in need of special nurturing" – defined as students of Asian or African origin, whose families were large and whose fathers had low educational achievements.⁴ It also resulted in the establishment of a separate category of schools – "schools for pupils in need of special nurturing." This nurturing included special teaching materials, preparatory courses for teachers, a separate curriculum, and enrichment classes. The Ministry of Education allocated special budgets and established special supervisory bodies. The basic assumption of the undertaking, which was buttressed by several theoretical justifications, was that these pupils lacked the intellectual baggage to tackle the official curriculum and thus required special programs designed for the disadvantaged.⁵

Since then, the euphemism "in need of special nurturing" has become part and parcel of the Israeli educational system. "Schools for pupils in need of special nurturing" can be found in every Mizrahi neighborhood and development town, and they differ from regular schools. They are staffed by teachers with relatively low qualifications⁶, who tend to doubt the capabilities of their charges⁷, and who teach a partial, less ▶



New Law Prohibits Ethnic Discrimination

In May 1991 the Knesset passed an amendment (#18) to the Compulsory Education Law (1949) prohibiting ethnic discrimination in admission to educational institutions. It was prompted by a suit brought by Mizrahi parents from B'nai Brak whose children had not been admitted to a local Orthodox parochial school, due to a quota of 30% for Mizrahi children. The amendment states: "The local educational authority and educational institutions shall not discriminate on the basis of ethnicity in each of the following: (1) the registration and admission of students; (2) the setting up of separate curricula and tracks in the same school; (3) the creation of separate classes in the same school."

demanding version of the official study program. To this day, more than half of Mizrahi pupils enrolled in elementary and junior high schools are defined as disadvantaged.⁸ Moreover, the stigma and accompanying low expectations adhere to most Mizrahi schoolchildren,



Where Does the Money Really Go?

Repeated announcements by the Ministry of Education that "special budgets" were being allocated to schools for disadvantaged pupils have led people to believe that schools in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns receive more money than regular schools. A study conducted by the Ministry itself reveals the real facts of the matter: "The services and programs originally designated for schools for pupils in need of special nurturing, ended up mainly in schools for the affluent, or were equally divided between the three types of schools: schools for pupils in need of special nurturing, integrated schools, and schools for the affluent."⁹



including those who come from small families and whose parents are affluent and educated.

In 1980, the most extensive study of elementary school performance conducted in Israel found that "in grades 4-6, there was a two years' difference between the average performance of the [Mizrahi and Ashkenazi] origin groups."¹⁰

The division between regular schools and schools for disadvantaged children holds in both the public secular schools and the public religious schools. In each case, schools "for pupils in need of special nurturing" are inferior.

Jewish Schools and Arab Schools

Arab schoolchildren study in separate schools. The division, which became official in the British Mandate period, was maintained after the establishment of the state and reinforced by the geographical separation between Arab and Jewish towns and villages. It was also facilitated by the Military Government imposed on Arab population concentrations from 1948 to 1966, which limited the freedom of movement of residents of Arab communities.

Despite distinctions among Muslims (who constitute more than 80% of the total number of Arab schoolchildren), Christians and Druze, Arab schools are quite similar to one another.¹¹ When it comes to educational achievements, aside from a few exceptions, they resemble Jewish schools located in urban Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns. Research findings show that there is a two-year discrepancy

between Arab and Jewish pupils with regard to scholastic achievements. A research team investigating achievements in arithmetic found that "success rates . . . among Muslims . . . are similar in many areas to those of children of first-generation immigrants from Asia and Africa . . ."¹³ This disparity is similar to that found between Jewish schools in affluent neighborhoods and schools in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns.

In contrast to "schools for pupils in need of special nurturing," which became the object of special attention during the 1960s – Arab schools have never been the object of special programs or budgetary allocations. A 1985 governmental report reveals the following facts about Arab education: 1/4 of the teachers are uncertified; there is a serious lack of school buildings and classrooms; the average number of pupils per class is 31.2, compared with 26.3 for the Jewish sector; there is a shortage of textbooks; and there is a considerable lag in the introduction of innovative programs.¹⁴

The similarity between Arab and Mizrahi schools is connected with the socio-economic status of members of the two groups. This similarity is not easy for Israelis to perceive, as comparisons are usually made separately – between Arabs and Jews, on the one hand, and between Mizrahim and Ashkenazim, on the other. In the public mind, the three groups are ordered as follows: Ashkenazim, Mizrahim and

Arabs. In actuality, the position of Mizrahim is closer to that of Arabs than to that of Ashkenazim. Thus, for example, in 1988, the average monthly income for an urban Arab household headed by a wage earner was 2,012 IS, somewhat lower than the average income of an urban Jewish household headed by an Israeli-born Mizrahi wage earner – 2,494 IS, and much lower than that of an urban household headed by an Israeli-born Ashkenazi wage earner – 3,734 IS.¹⁵ It should be noted that there are more persons in Arab households than in Jewish Mizrahi ones, so that the per capita income in the former is lower.¹⁶ ■

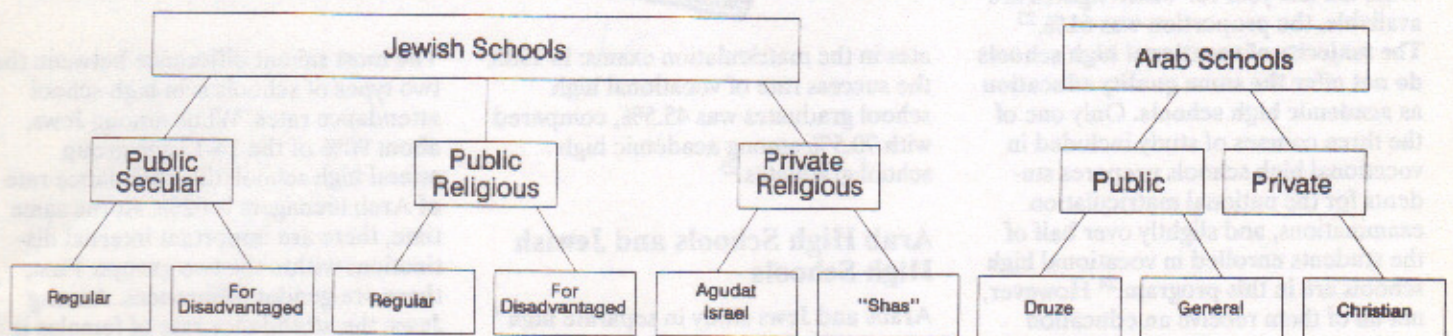
Lack of Early Education

Very few preschool facilities are to be found in Arab communities. While 67% of Jewish 2-year-olds attend day care centers, there are no equivalent facilities for Arab toddlers. Only 20% of Arab 3-year-olds attend preschool, compared with 92% of Jewish children, while 40% of Arab 4-year-olds and 99% of Jewish 4-year-olds are enrolled in preschools.¹²

Auxiliary Educational Services Almost Non-existent

Many of the auxiliary services provided as a matter of course in Jewish schools, like educational and psychological counseling, medical services, school nurses, dental care, social workers and truant officers do not exist in most Arab schools. Due to their scarcity, Arab schools are not even included in a survey of welfare and educational services conducted in 1989.¹⁷ In its 1985 report, the Commission on Arab Education noted that most Arab schools also lacked teachers with proper training in special subjects like Art, Handicrafts, Music, and Physical Education.¹⁸

Divisions Among Israeli Schools





High Schools: No Matriculation for the Majority

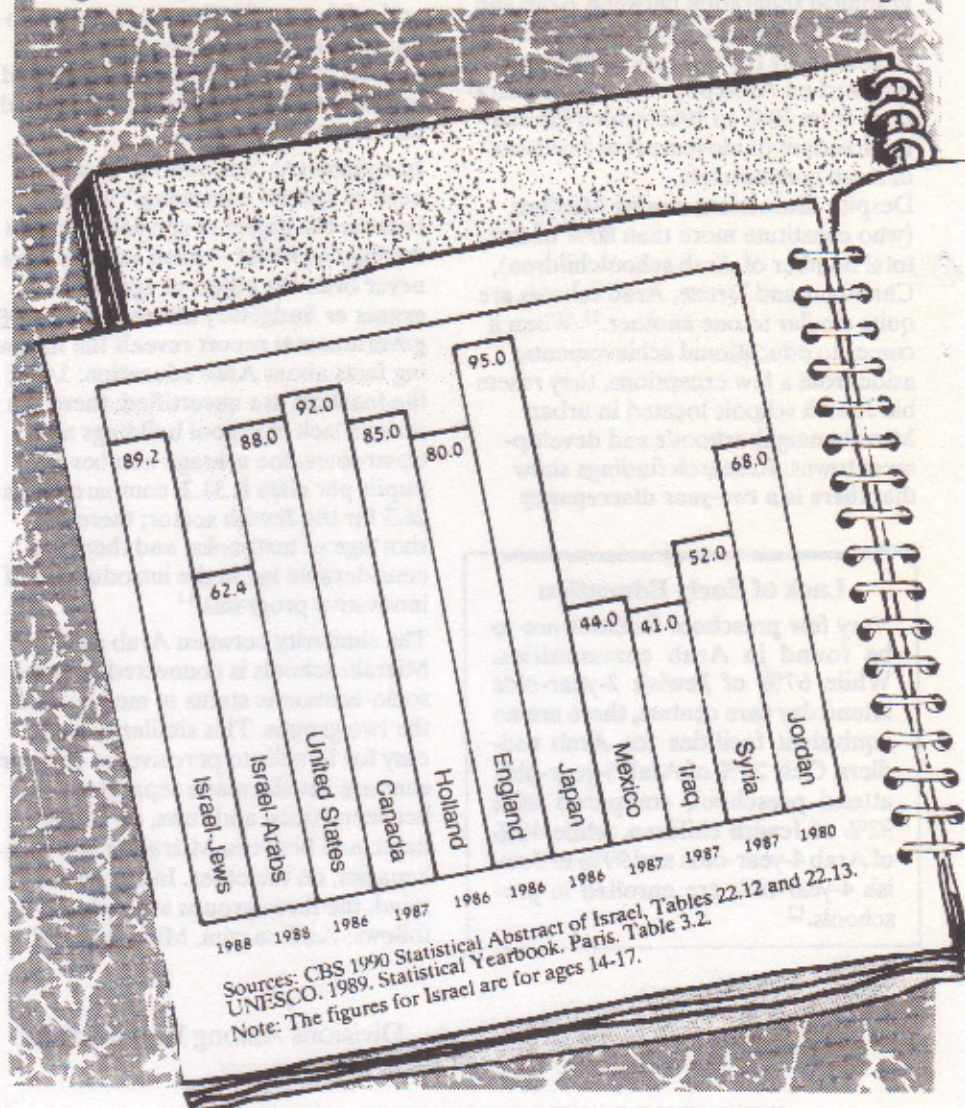
The high school attendance rate of Jewish teenagers in Israel is 89.2% - similar to that prevailing in the First World. The attendance rate of Arab teenagers in Israel, however, resembles that in the Third World, 62.4%.¹⁹ Since 1968, when the Educational Reform was instituted, there have been two systems in effect. Communities in which "the reform" was introduced have 6 years of elementary school, 3 of junior high (grades 7-9) and 3 of senior high (grades 10-12). In 1989, 56.8% of the relevant Jewish age group were enrolled in schools in which the reform was in effect.²⁰ The proportion of Arab children studying under "the reform" was slightly lower - 50%.²¹ In other communities, the pattern is 8 years of elementary school and 4 years of high school.

Academic High Schools and Vocational High Schools

There are a number of divisions that contribute to inequality of opportunity in Israeli high schools. The first is between academic and vocational schools. Most of the vocational schools were introduced beginning in the 1960s to accommodate graduates of elementary schools in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns who did not qualify for academic high schools. Today, a little over half of the Jewish high school population attends vocational schools.²² During the 1970s, about two-thirds of Mizrahi high school students were enrolled in vocational high schools. In 1982, the last year for which figures are available, the proportion was 61%.²³

The majority of vocational high schools do not offer the same quality education as academic high schools. Only one of the three courses of study included in vocational high schools prepares students for the national matriculation examinations, and slightly over half of the students enrolled in vocational high schools are in this program.²⁴ However, not all of them receive an education equivalent to that offered in academic high schools. The difference is clearly reflected in the success rates of gradu-

High School Attendance Rates for Selected Countries, in Percentages



ates in the matriculation exams: in 1988, the success rate of vocational high school graduates was 45.5%, compared with 70.5% among academic high school graduates.²⁵

Arab High Schools and Jewish High Schools

Arabs and Jews study in separate high schools, aside from a very small minority of students from affluent Arab families who study in Jewish schools.

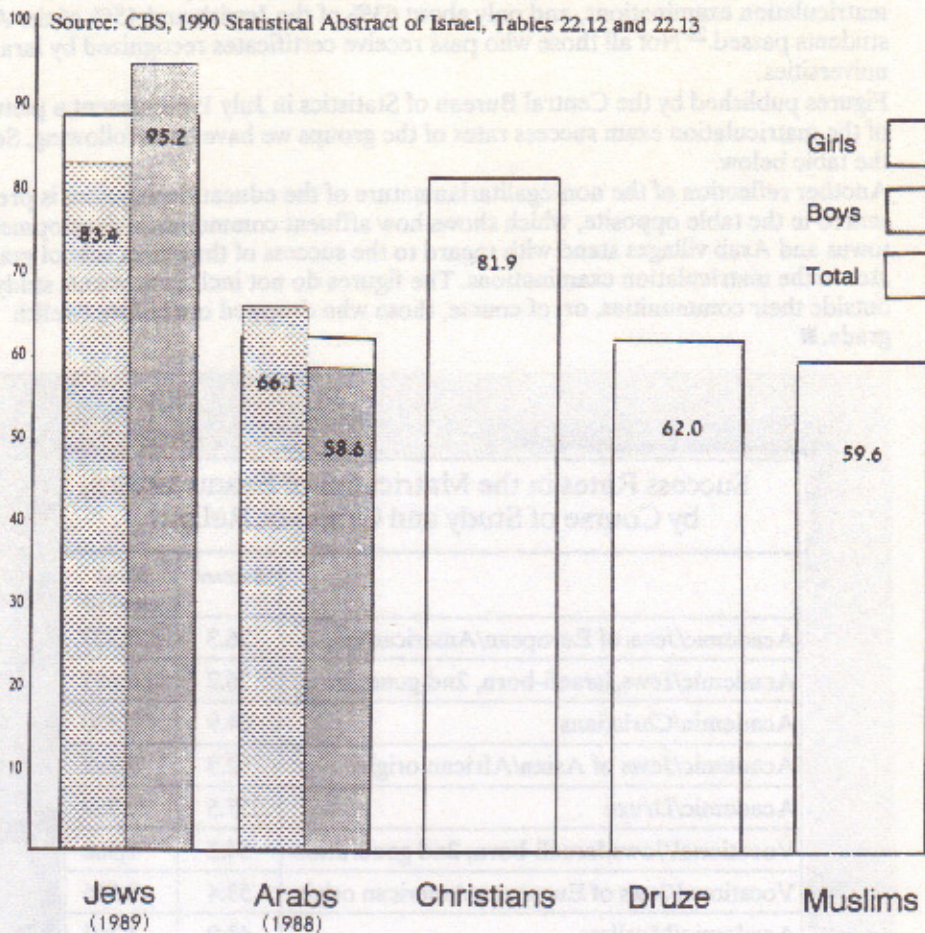
The most salient difference between the two types of schools is in high school attendance rates. While among Jews, about 90% of the 14-17 age group attend high school, the attendance rate of Arab teenagers is 62%. At the same time, there are important internal distinctions within the two groups. First, there are gender differences. Among Jews, the attendance rate of females is 95.2%, higher than that of males - 83.4%, while among Arabs, the attendance rate of males - 66.1% - is higher

than that of females - 58.6%. Secondly, there are significant differences among the three Arab religious groups. The attendance rate among Christians resembles that of Jews, while the attendance rates of Druze and Muslims are much lower.

The Israeli government established vocational high schools to keep Mizrahi students in school. It has done nothing to deal with the problem of drop-outs in the Arab sector. Most Arab high schools are academic high schools; about 20% of Arab high school students are enrolled in vocational schools,²⁶ most of them in non-prestigious courses.²⁷ However, the term "academic" is misleading, for the majority of schools provide a sub-standard education, parallel to that offered by vocational high schools in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns. The level of instruction in mathematics, English and Hebrew language skills is low, there is an emphasis on rote learning, a shortage of laboratories and auxiliary services, and a lack of options, like writing a term paper instead of taking the matriculation exam.

Among Arab high schools, the most salient difference is between private high schools belonging to Christian orders and public high schools. A number of the Arab parochial high schools are as good as the best of academic high schools in affluent Jewish neighborhoods. It should be noted that Muslim and Druze students from affluent families may also attend the Christian schools.

High School Attendance Rates, for the 14-17 Age Group, by Religion, in Percentages



Dead End High Schools and College Preparatory High Schools

In 1987, new standards were set for admission to Israeli universities. In effect, the change gave preference to students receiving high marks in mathematics, English and Hebrew language skills, at advanced proficiency levels. The practical outcome was to rank high schools according to the type of college preparation they provided. At the top are a few dozen high schools, most

located in the affluent neighborhoods of the big cities. In these schools, every student in senior high is expected to master mathematics, English, Hebrew, and other subjects at high levels of proficiency. Next are the schools in which only one or two classes follow courses of study dictated by the new admission standards, while the remainder prepare for matriculation exams at lower proficiency levels. Under the present situation of tight competition for university entrance, the latter do not have much chance of college admission. At the bottom are vocational schools that do not prepare any of their students for matriculation certificates at levels presently required for university admission, or which give out high school diplomas not recognized by Israeli universities. ▶



Billboard ad for high school: "7th and 8th grade graduates: Study for a full matriculation in a basketball and volleyball track at Mikve Israel High School"

Who Passes the Matriculation Exams?

In 1989, only 50% of Jewish 17-year-olds and 26% of Arab 17-year-olds²⁸ sat for the matriculation examinations, and only about 63% of the Jewish and 45% of the Arab students passed.²⁹ Not all those who pass receive certificates recognized by Israeli universities.

Figures published by the Central Bureau of Statistics in July 1989 present a picture of the matriculation exam success rates of the groups we have been following. See the table below.

Another reflection of the non-egalitarian nature of the educational system is presented in the table opposite, which shows how affluent communities, development towns and Arab villages stand with regard to the success of their high school graduates in the matriculation examinations. The figures do not include students studying outside their communities, or, of course, those who dropped out before twelfth grade. ■

Success Rates in the Matriculation Examinations, by Course of Study and Origin or Religion

	Percent	Total Number
Academic/Jews of European/American origin	76.3	6,327
Academic/Jews, Israeli-born, 2nd generation	76.2	6,681
Academic/Christians	64.9	530
Academic/Jews of Asian/African origin	62.3	7,792
Academic/Druze	55.5	759
Vocational/Jews, Israeli-born, 2nd generation	54.2	1,962
Vocational/Jews of European/American origin	53.4	2,526
Academic/Muslims	44.0	3,163
Vocational/Druze	39.7	63
Vocational/Jews of Asian/African origin	38.8	4,843
Vocational/Christians	30.8	52
Vocational/Muslims	17.4	288

Source: Based on "Students Tested and Earning Matriculation Certificates, By Personal Characteristics and Educational Track, Jewish and Arab Education," Central Bureau of Statistics, Press Release, 19.6.89.

Note: Gender differences in success rates are small, with one exception - Jewish boys on the vocational track have a much higher success rate than girls.

Twelfth Grade Students Earning Matriculation Certificates, Out of the General Population of Twelfth Graders, By Community - Urban Communities with a Population of 10,000 or More, 1989

Key: ◇ Mizrahi Majority ◆ Arab

◆ Rahat	10.0
◇ Beit Shemesh	16.6
◆ Baka el Gharbiya	17.3
◇ Rosh Haayin	17.9
◆ B'nai Brak	19.3
◇ Ofakim	19.4
◇ Dimona	19.8
◇ Kiryat Shmona	20.0
◇ Tirat Hacarmel	20.3
◇ Ramle	20.4
◆ Sakhnin	21.6
◇ Kiryat Gat	21.9
◇ Or Yehuda	22.1
◇ Lod	23.1
◇ Beit Shean	23.5
◇ Safed	24.6
◆ Umm el Fahm	24.9
◇ Tiberias	25.0
◆ Taibe	26.1
◇ Eilat	26.5
◇ Migdal Haemek	26.9
◇ Acre	27.2
◆ Shfaram	27.3
◇ Kiryat Malahi	27.8
◇ Nesher	30.7
◇ Beer Sheba	32.7
◆ Nazareth Elite	33.0
◆ Pardes Hannah	33.0
◆ Carmiel	33.1
◇ Kiryat Ata	34.8
◇ Afula	36.1
◇ Ashdod	38.6
◆ Ma'aleh Adumim	39.2
◇ Yahud	39.5
◆ Kfar Kana	39.8
◆ Tamra	40.7
◆ Kiryat Yam	41.6
◇ Ashkelon	42.2
◆ Nazareth	43.5
◆ Jerusalem	43.7
◆ Bat Yam	44.3
◇ Yavneh	44.5
◆ Arad	45.3
◆ Netanya	46.0
◆ Hod Hasharon	47.1
◆ Tel Aviv	47.7
◆ Kiryat Tivon	48.0
◆ Hadera	48.1
◆ Holon	48.1
◆ Rishon L'Zion	49.1
◆ Arabe	49.7
◆ Tira	50.0
◆ Petah Tikva	50.1
◆ Nahariya	50.3
◆ Nes Ziona	50.8
◆ Mevaseret Zion	50.8
◆ Kiryat Motzkin	51.0
◆ Kiryat Bialik	53.2
◆ Kfar Saba	56.4
◆ Maghar	56.7
◆ Herzliya	57.2
◆ Rehovot	58.1
◆ Givatayim	59.1
◆ Haifa	59.4
◆ Ramat Gan	60.7
◆ Raanana	61.5
◆ Ramat Hasharon	65.2
◆ Kiryat Ono	67.9

Source: "Twelfth Graders Tested and Earning Matriculation Certificates/High School Completion Diplomas - By Community of Residence and Community of Study." Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, November 1990.

Higher Education: The Privilege of a Small Minority



In Israel, the proportion of college-age youth enrolled in universities is small, compared to that in Western countries. University students constitute only 8.2% of the 20-29 age group (from which 80% of the students come;³⁰ between the ages of 18-20, most Jews are in compulsory military service). The figure for the 20-24 age group is 9.4%; for the 25-29 group, 6.8%.³¹

If we add all those enrolled in institutes of higher learning, including The Open University, we find that students comprise about 14% of the 20-29 age group, which is lower than the proportion of students in many other parts of the world.

Israel has 7 universities (including the Weizmann Institute, a graduate school), in which 67,750 students were enrolled in the 1989-90 academic year.³²

In addition, there are a number of institutes of higher learning, most of which do not confer undergraduate degrees - teacher training colleges, schools for technicians and practical engineers, nursing schools, secretarial schools, and art schools. In 1989-90, these had a combined enrollment of 33,600, only 8,300 of them degree candidates.³³ To this number should be added the 13,000 students enrolled in The Open University, a small minority of whom are studying for degrees.³⁴

Jewish Students in Israel and the Diaspora

The proportion of Jewish college students in Israel is low when compared with that of youth in a number of other Jewish communities. In the Paris area, 55% of the 20-24 age group were enrolled in institutes of higher learning in the beginning of the 1980s.³⁴ Although comparable statistics are not available for other Jewish communities, figures are available on the proportion of college-educated persons in the total adult population, and these can give us a rough basis for comparison. For example, in 1970, more than a third of the adult Jewish population of the Russian republic of the Soviet Union had a col-



lege education.³⁶ In the United States, in the 1980s, about 90% of the Jews living in big cities had been to college; 80% of the Jews living in the city of Washington, D.C. held Masters or Ph.D. degrees.³⁷ In comparison, the proportion of adult Israelis with 13 years or more of schooling in 1989 was 27.6%.³⁸ The only Jewish group in Israel whose educational achievements approach those of Jews in the above communities is the Ashkenazi one. For Israeli-born Ashkenazim, the proportion of the 20-29 age group enrolled in accredited universities is about 15%. If we add students enrolled in The Open University and in non-accredited institutions, assuming that the ethnic breakdown (for which no figures are available) is similar to that of university students, the total enrollment of Ashkenazi youth in higher education comes to about 25%. This is lower than the enrollment of Jew-

ish youth in France and the United States. As for Mizrahim, their educational achievements are considerably lower than those of their cohorts in France, the only other Mizrahi community for which figures are available. For Israeli-born Mizrahim, the proportion of the 20-29 age group enrolled in accredited universities is about 4.0%. If we add students enrolled in The Open University and in non-accredited institutions of higher learning, assuming that the ethnic breakdown is similar to that of university students, we reach a total figure of 6.7%. In contrast, a study conducted among French Jews in the 1980s revealed that in the Paris area, nearly half of French Jews of Moroccan origin between the ages of 25 and 29 had a college education.³⁹ The proportion of adult Mizrahi Jews in Israel with 13 years of schooling or more was 17.6% in 1989.⁴⁰ ▶

Higher Education Attendance Rates in Israel, Percentage of 18-29 Age-Group

Israeli-born Jewish men, origin Europe/America (25-29)	16.6
Israeli-born Jewish women, origin Europe/America (18-24)	15.2
Israeli-born Jewish men, second generation (25-29)	14.6
Foreign-born Jewish women, origin Europe/America (18-24)	14.2
Foreign-born Jewish men, origin Europe/America (25-29)	12.4
Israeli-born Jewish women, second generation (18-24)	11.5
Christian men (18-24)	11.4
Christian women (18-24)	8.5
Foreign-born Jewish men, origin Asia (18-24)	6.9
Muslim men (18-24)	6.0
Foreign-born Jewish women, origin Asia (18-24)	5.0
Israeli-born Jewish men, origin Asia (25-29)	4.6
Foreign-born Jewish women, origin Africa (18-24)	4.4
Israeli-born Jewish women, origin Asia (18-24)	4.1
Foreign-born Jewish men, origin Africa (18-24)	3.9
Israeli-born Jewish men, origin Africa (25-29)	3.7
Israeli-born Jewish women, origin Africa (18-24)	3.1
Druze men (25-29)	2.5
Muslim women (18-24)	2.1
Druze women (18-24)	0.6

Source: Population and Housing Census 1983, Publication No. 10: Educational Attributes of the Population and Spoken Languages, Table 6a.

Note: The Israeli Census of 1983 does not present an overall figure for the 18-29 age group, but rather, figures for two separate age groups: 18-24 and 25-29. In order to simplify matters, the highest attendance rate is presented for each social group.

Palestinian Students in and Outside Israel

The formal educational achievements of Palestinian citizens of Israel are lower than those of Palestinians in other countries. They are also lower than those of the general population of college-age persons in a number of Arab countries. This tendency has been apparent for some time. In 1967-68, there were more than 25,000 students in Jordan,⁴¹ about 90% of whom were Palestinians.⁴² In contrast, there were only 268 Arab students in Israel in 1966.⁴³ Even if we take into account the fact that Palestinian citizens of Israel constitute only one-seventh or one-eighth of the total

Palestinian nation, the gap is still very large. If the educational achievements of Palestinian citizens of Israel had been equivalent to those of Palestinians living in other countries, there would have been over 3,000 students at the time. Ten years later, when the number of Palestinian students in the world had risen to about 80,000,⁴⁴ the number of Palestinian students in Israel was 2,000, while the equivalent number would have been about 10,000. About 82% of the total Palestinian student population were enrolled in Arab universities, mainly in Lebanon, Egypt, and Syria; some 2,750

attended universities in Eastern Europe and the United States.⁴⁵

Arab students enrolled in Israeli universities have a number of special problems, like adjustment to instruction in the Hebrew language, and the fact that the universities are located at a distance from Arab population centers, making it necessary for students to obtain housing. The number of places reserved for Arab students in student dormitories is limited, and landlords in the private market often refuse to rent to them.

Gender Inequality: Attendance and Curriculum



There are three ways to check the degree of equality between females and males in the educational system: by comparing formal measures of school attendance and educational achievements, by examining the courses and subjects of study, and by analyzing the overt and latent values contained in the curriculum and teaching materials with regard to gender.

Formal measures like school attendance rates and educational achievements reveal the degree of openness of the educational system to females, as well as the openness of the various ethnic and religious communities with regard to the education of girls.

For Jews in Israel, the attendance rates for females are no different from those of males. Since the beginning of the 1980s, about half of elementary school pupils, high school pupils, and college students have been females.

In the Arab communities, attendance rates for females are lower than those for males. The greatest disparity is found among Muslims and Druze, but among Christians, attendance rates are also lower for females than for males. Discrepancies first appear at the stage of elementary education - 96.3% for males, compared with 93.8% for females, and increase in high school - 58.6% for females and 66.1% for males.⁴⁶ The greatest inequities are found at the university level: among the 18-24 age group (which is the relevant one for Arab citizens of Israel, who do not usually serve in the armed forces), the attendance rate is 6.0% for Muslim men and 2.1% for Muslim women; for Druze, it is 2.4% for men and 0.6% for women; and for Christians, 11.4% for men and 8.5% for women - the lowest discrepancy to be found among Arab religious groups in Israel.

The differences between Christians, Muslims and Druze indicate that the variance can probably be attributed to the degree of openness of each religious community regarding the education of females, rather than to the closure of the educational system.

Turning to courses and subjects of

Attendance Rates for Arab Females and Males, in Percentages of the Relevant Age Group

Elementary School		High School		University					
				Muslim		Druze		Christian	
Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males
93.8	96.3								
		58.6	66.1						
				2.1	6.0	0.6	2.4	8.5	11.4

study, we find significant differences between females and males, and these differences hold regardless of national or ethnic origin.

In the universities, there is a high concentration of females in the humanities, 74.4% in 1989,⁴⁷ and in certain subjects, like languages, education and teaching, art, theater, musicology, social work, criminology and the para-medical professions.⁴⁸

In elementary and junior high school, most girls study together with boys (the exceptions being schools in a number of Muslim and Druze villages and Jewish Orthodox schools). They generally study the same range of subjects, with several exceptions: physical education is considered irrelevant for girls in many Arab schools; religious studies in Jewish religious schools are different for the two sexes; and home economics and crafts are usually only for girls and shop only for boys in both Arab and Jewish schools.⁴⁹

The process of formal differentiation generally begins in high school, effected by means of vocational guidance or individual choice (influenced by prevailing notions concerning women's work). In academic high schools, girls tend to con-

centrate in the humanities, while boys are more inclined to the physical sciences. In vocational schools, the separation is total, with subjects like fashion, nursing, hairdressing and secretarial skills designated for girls. Here separate means unequal because "female" subjects and vocations have lower value on the job market than their "male" counterparts, and "crossing" is not generally encouraged.

The third way to examine the extent of gender equality in the educational system is to analyze the overt and latent values reflected in teaching materials concerning relations between the sexes. Such an analysis reveals that gender inequality begins outside the system - with the expectations of parents and teachers. Israeli parents, Arab and Jewish alike, attach greater importance to the education of boys than to that of girls.⁵⁰ The teaching materials, too, present boys in a much more positive light.⁵¹ If we wish to check the relative weight of gender inequality with that of inequality based on class, nationality, or ethnic origin, we can examine differences in IQ test scores. Within all the social groups we have been examining - Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, and Arabs, gender dif-

ferences have been found in test scores, and these differences are similar for all three groups. In a study of the relative influence of nationality, religion, socioeconomic class, and gender, it was found that gender had the smallest influ-

ence; among Arabs, religion had the greatest influence, and among Jews, ethnic origin was the strongest indication. The second highest influence was socioeconomic status, followed by gender.⁵² In other words, national or ethnic origin

and class are the main determinants of the position of Ashkenazim, Mizrahim and Arabs in the Israeli educational system; within each of these groups, there are internal gender divisions, in favor of the males of each group.⁵³ ■



Past and Present: Are the Gaps Disappearing?

Is the educational scene more egalitarian now than it was in the 1950s? Can the Israeli educational system be proud of its accomplishments?

In the forty odd years since the establishment of the state and the mass immigration that followed, the general educational level of the Israeli population has risen considerably. Elementary education is now almost universal; high school education encompasses about 90% of Jewish and about 62% of Arab youth. The attendance rates of Muslim and Druze girls, though lower than those of boys, are higher than they were when the state of Israel first came into being.

However, while the general level of education has increased, the disparities among three population groups - Ashkenazi Jews, Mizrahi Jews, and

Arabs - have also grown. The group that underwent the greatest improvement were the middle and upper class Ashkenazi Jews, who were able to take advantage of the growth of quality high school education and the expansion of higher education, at the same time that they established themselves financially and politically. In other words, the Ashkenazim sprinted forward, leaving the other groups far behind, despite the fact that they, too, moved forward.

For Mizrahim, the major change has been an increase in high school attendance. During the 1950s, the attendance rate was low, while today it resembles that of Ashkenazim and is much higher than that of Muslim and Druze Arabs. The increase was accomplished through the expansion of vocational education, which, as has been noted, leads to

matriculation for only a small proportion of the total population of vocational high school students.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the proportion of Mizrahim enrolled in universities increased considerably - from 13% of all first-degree students in 1967 to 30% in 1987.⁵⁴ However, if the percentage of Mizrahim were equal to their proportion of the population, it would be double what it is. The proportion of Mizrahim enrolled in second (18%) and third-degree (13.1%) programs is still small.⁵⁵

In view of the small number of Mizrahim enrolled in high school programs that prepare them for matriculation, it is doubtful whether their proportional university enrollment will continue to grow at the same pace.

Over the years, the general gap between the two Jewish origin groups has not narrowed: in 1961, 3% of new immigrants from Asia and Africa had 13 years of schooling or more, compared with 12.7% for new immigrants from Europe and America. In 1981, the comparable figures were 11.6% and 41.8%. While the proportions grew, the gap between them remained more or less stable.⁵⁶

For Palestinian citizens of Israel, the greatest change since the 1950s has been the expansion of elementary education. High school education has also grown, but it still does not include more than 62.4% of Arab teenagers, and higher education, which also increased, is not relevant for more than 2% of the college age group. While the achievements of Christian Arabs - girls as well as boys - resemble those of Ashkenazi Jews, the educational achievements of Muslims and Druze are much lower, and this is especially true for females. ■



Israel in International Perspective

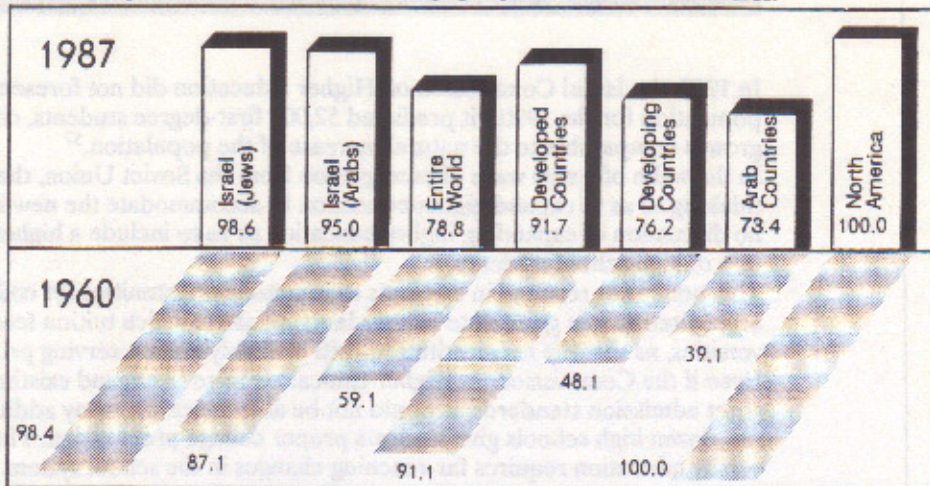


The question that should now be asked is how the changes outlined above compare with those that occurred in other parts of the world. When it comes to elementary education, Israel resembles the developed countries of the First World; the most significant change that occurred here was in the Arab sector (although the drop-out rate is still high). There have been considerable advances in high school education as well, mainly for Jews; this change is parallel to that of the First World (but we should recall that it involved making vocational schools the norm in Mizrahi neighborhoods and development towns). For Arabs, however, the changes in high school education are closer to those of the Third World than to the First, although their progress has been more marked.

When it comes to advances in higher education, Israel as a whole is closer to the Third World than the First, and way behind North America. Arab countries have made greater progress, and their attendance rates are similar to Israel's. These generalizations hold for the population at large; the enrollment of Mizrahim and Arabs in institutes of higher learning still lags behind the overall average of developing countries and of the Arab world. (See the accompanying graphs.) ■

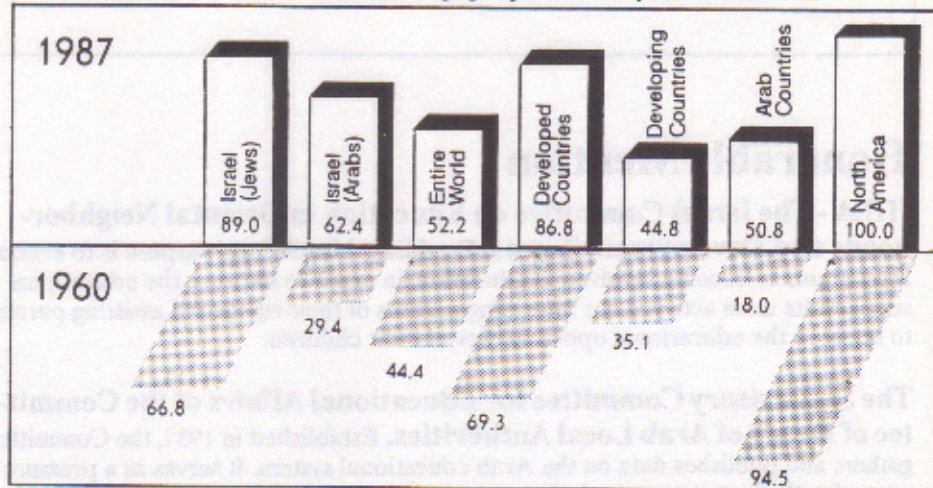
School Attendance, Ages 6-11, in Israel and in Selected Categories of Countries, 1960 and 1987 (in Percentages)

Note: The figures for Israel are for the 6-13 age group and relate to 1970 and 1988.



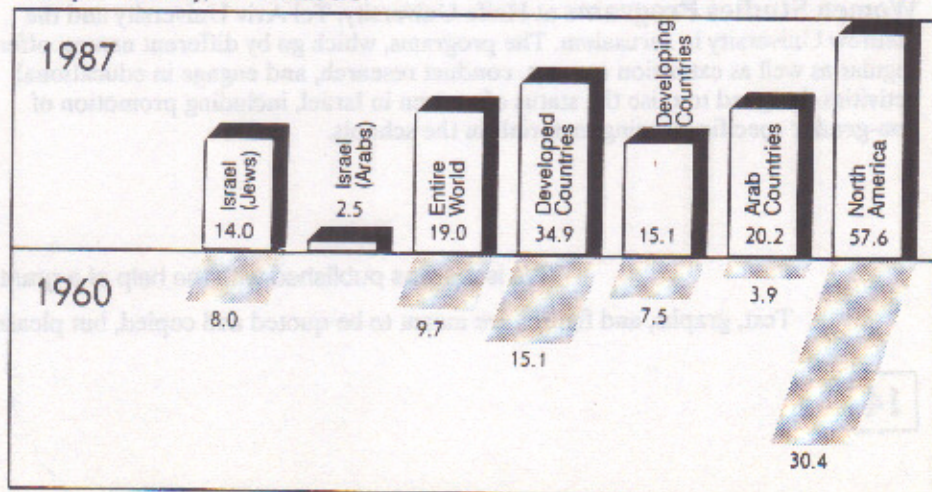
School Attendance, Ages 12-17, in Israel and Selected Categories of Countries, 1960 and 1987 (in Percentages)

Note: The figures for Israel are for the 14-17 age group and for the years 1970 and 1988.



School Attendance, Ages 18-23, in Israel and Selected Categories of Countries, 1960 and 1987 (in Percentages)

Note: The figures for Israel include students aged 20-29 in all institutes of higher learning, including The Open University, for 1970 and 1987



Sources for all three graphs: 1990 Statistical Abstract of Israel, Tables 22.12, 22.13, 22.14, 22.33 and 22.45; UNESCO, 1989, Statistical Yearbook, Paris, Table 2.11.

* The figures for Jewish students for 1970 and 1987 are based on the assumption that the age breakdown of non-university students is similar to that of university students.

** No figure is available for Arab students as a percentage of the age group for 1970. The figures for 1987 include only university students.

Prospects for the Future

In 1987, the Israel Commission on Higher Education did not foresee a significant increase in the student population for the 1990s; it predicted 52,000 first-degree students, compared with 45,000 in 1987, that is, growth comparable to the natural increase of the population.⁵⁷

In the wake of a new wave of immigration from the Soviet Union, the Commission has begun to revise its thinking so as to expand higher education to accommodate the new immigrants. To date there has been no discussion of expanding higher education so as to include a higher proportion of the existing population of high school students.

This policy has resulted in attempts to increase opportunities for college study in other directions; thus, accreditation was granted to private law schools, in which tuition fees are much higher than at Israeli universities, so that the new institutions will probably end up serving primarily the middle class.

Even if the Commission on Higher Education were to expand existing universities, while maintaining strict admission standards, it would not be able to recruit many additional students, for not more than a few dozen high schools give students proper college preparation. Thus the expansion of high-quality university education requires far-reaching changes in the school system.

Honorable Mention

HILA - The Israel Committee on Education in Oriental Neighborhoods and Development Towns. Established in 1987, its purpose is to encourage parents to become involved in education, in order to improve the educational services. Its main activities are informing parents of their rights and assisting parents to improve the educational opportunities of their children.

The Supervisory Committee for Educational Affairs of the Committee of Heads of Arab Local Authorities. Established in 1987, the Committee gathers and publishes data on the Arab educational system. It serves as a pressure group for the improvement of educational services in Arab communities, through public action on the national level as well as through activities within the Arab community.

Women Studies Programs at Haifa University, Tel Aviv University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. The programs, which go by different names, offer regular as well as extension courses, conduct research, and engage in educational activities designed to raise the status of women in Israel, including promotion of non-gender specific learning materials in the schools.

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