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**EQUALITY SITUATION IN EDUCATION IN ISRAEL**

**СИТУАЦИЯ РАВЕНСТВА В ОБРАЗОВАНИИ В ИЗРАИЛЕ**

**SITUAȚIA DE EQUALITATE ÎN EDUCAȚIE ÎN ISRAEL**

*SIROTA Julia, PhD,  
Ort Braude College, Israel  
HAJAJRA Mohamed, Manager, PhD student,  
Free International University of Moldova, Chisinau*

*SIROTA Julia, PhD,  
Ort Braude College, Israel  
HAJAJRA Mohamed, Manager, doctorand,  
Universitatea Liberă Internațională din Moldova, Chișinău*

**Annotation:** "All people are created equal" – this phrase, allegedly, that expresses the basic principal of equality of all human being, seems obvious to us. It is based on religious beliefs, on universal moral principles, on international conventions and legislation. But, although there is a broad agreement regarding its content, in practice, it is far from being implemented. In the current research the authors examined the equality issue in the education policy in the state of Israel and I will focus on the economic causes to marginalization in education while focusing on the Bedouin sector.

**Аннотация:** «Все люди созданы равными» – эта фраза, которая выражает основной принцип равенства всего человеческого бытия, кажется очевидным для нас. Он основан на религиозных верованиях, на универсальных моральных принципах, на международных конвенциях и законодательствах. Но, хотя большинство согласны относительно его содержания, это далеко не применяется на практике. В данных исследованиях авторы рассмотрели вопрос равенства в политике образования государства Израиль, и сделают акцент на экономических причинах маргинализации в сфере образования, сосредоточив внимание на секторе бедуинов.

**Keywords:** equality, inequality, education, sectors.

**Ключевые слова:** равенство, неравенство, образование, секторы.

**Introduction**

In Israel, the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty was enacted, followed by a series of judgments determining that the right to equality is a constitutional right derived from the right to dignity; However, sixty-two years after the establishment of the State of Israel, there is still no explicit constitutional anchoring in Israel for the right to equality. A country that seeks to act with equality should allocate its resources fairly and even act vigorously to decrease social gaps within it. Fair allocation of resources is the basis for equality in many fields: for example, a fair allocation of educational resources is essential to create equal opportunities in society. Thus, those who were fortunate enough to study in an air-conditioned and computerized classroom with only small

number of students, would certainly enjoy an advantage over a student with the same potential who learned in an old, hot and dense classroom.

### **Materials and methods of research**

The authors of this papers studies the existing inequality between different sectors- Jews, Arabs, Bedouins - in Israel. Especially in the field of education. They used the existing official data from Corak [3], Blass [2] research.

### **Results and considerations**

The importance of opportunity equality in the education system and attempts to achieve it are almost universally agreed upon in Israel, and the agreement crosses political and ethnic boundaries. In international tests, Israeli students are often at the top of the list of educational gaps between students of different classes and backgrounds, and over the years several committees have been established to discuss solutions to the situation. The heads of the education system used various methods in the struggle against inequality, and the most prominent were changes in budgeting methods, preferred conditions for educators who work in the geographic periphery, special curricula and adjusted frameworks to students of weak background. However, despite these considerable efforts, it seems that behind the scenes the picture looks somewhat different.

What do we know about the correlation between high levels of economic inequality and intergenerational mobility?

In the opening phrase of the book entitled "From Parents to Children - The Intergenerational Transmission of Advantage", Ermisch et al. [4] write that from the all potential consequences of the increase in economic inequality, there is nothing more disturbing and complicated to research than the possibility that an increase in inequality will lead in long-term to reduction in opportunity equality and reduction of intergenerational mobility.

This claim was influenced, among other things, by a series of works of the economist Miles Corak [3], which got great resonance among decision makers. Using comparative data from several countries, Corak examined the correlation between the degree of economic inequality and the intensity of correlation between parents' income and that of their offspring [3]. The findings may be presented in a diagram that places each of the countries on two axes.

The horizontal axis in Figure 1 reflects the degree of economic inequality in the country measured by the Gini Coefficient. The vertical axis indicates the intensity of the intergenerational correlation of incomes. The higher the value, the stronger the correlation between fathers' incomes and sons' incomes.

The pattern that shown by data shows that countries where economic inequality is particularly high (on the horizontal axis) are countries with high correlation between parents' income and those of their offspring. In other words, these countries have less intergenerational economic mobility, less accessibility to opportunities for the weaker populations, and less ability to extract the opportunities offered to them.

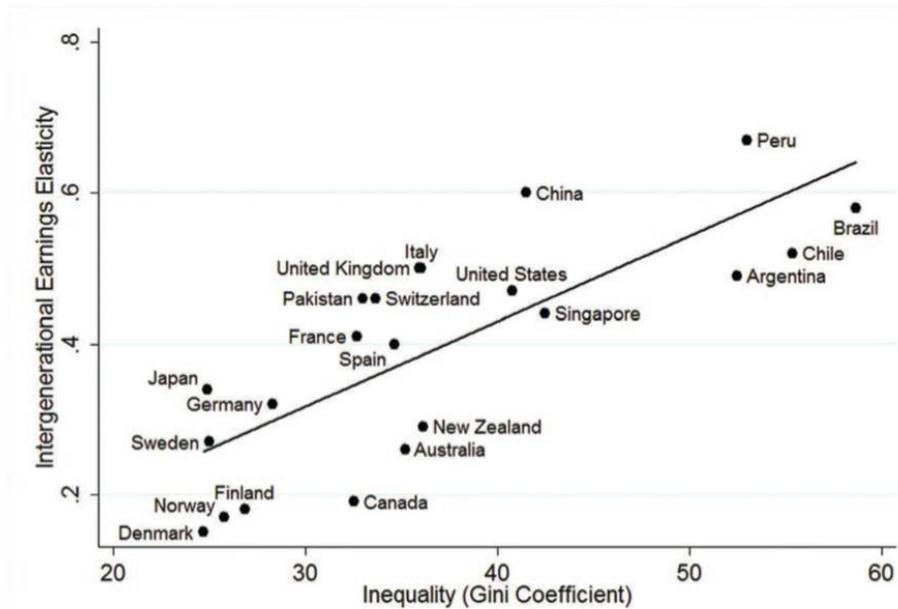


Figure 1. The correlation between the level of inequality in the country and the intensity of the intergenerational correlation of salary [3]

The state of Israel did not manage to establish a uniform state education system accessible to all. The most prominent characteristic of the Israeli education is the differentiation - national, religious, ethnic, class. This differentiation is not a result of pluralist multi-cultural world view, but of political and economic arrangements of many years that some were achieved in agreements and some by force. The differentiation, since it is anchored in political and economic power relations, is accompanied by great amount of inequality. The differentiation is also expressed in the administrative level: although all streams are formally subject to the ministry of education, but, in fact, the minister of education manages only the secular "state education", since the religious state education is managed by a separate department in the ministry of education, that is actually a kingdom within a kingdom. The orthodox education is also a kingdom within a kingdom and its management even sits outside the ministry of education.

Swirski and Buzaglo [5] claim that reducing the inequality was never in the middle of a state reform plan. The opposite: the big reform plans, those that were implied and those that were not, focused in organizational changes that empowered the advantage of students from strong populations. The Dovrat committee as an example – public committee that was appointed in 2003 by the Israeli government in order to perform comprehensive examination of the education system in Israel and recommend a plan to change. The committee acknowledged the depth of inequality in the education system and among its recommendations we may even find at least one important suggestion to cope with the problem – granting differential school budget, by which schools in cities that are not well – established will get higher budget of the one that schools in well - established cities get. Yet, the committee did not see a main mission in coping inequality. Instead, its most important recommendation was in the organizational level: to decentralize the system's administration, from the ministry of education to the regional and local authorities. This recommendation matches the macro-economic policy in Israel since 1985: maximizing the reduction of the state budget and at the same time transforming the responsibility from the central governing to other functions – business, civilian or local authorities.

**Demographic trends**

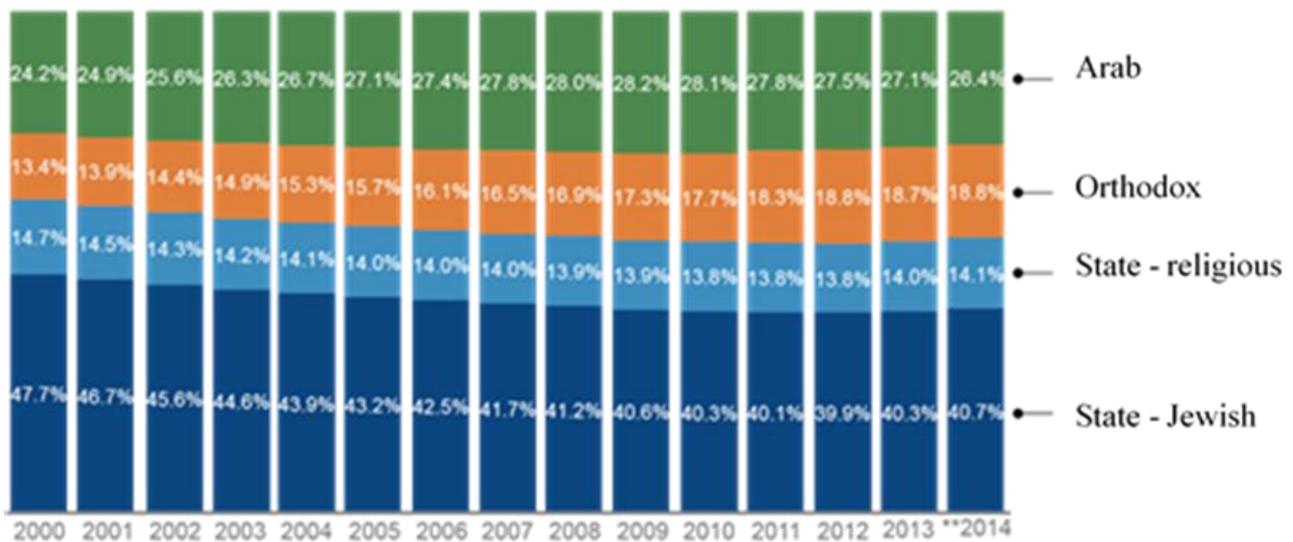
In the last five years there has been a decrease in the part of Arab and Orthodox students in the education system. Since these two populations are characterized in weak socio-economic background, it has a great influence on the system.

**Kindergartens** - in the last 15 years there were big changes in the rate of Arab and Orthodox children in kindergartens. In the first decade there were an increase in the rate of these two groups in kindergarten children's population, mostly because of the implementation of obligatory study law in socio-economic weak cities, that many of Arabs and Orthodox live in. However, in the last five years decreased the rate of Arabs and Orthodox in kindergartens, due to influences of implementation of Trajtenberg committee and changes in natural reproduction patterns.

**1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades** – the situation in 1st to 6th grades point a change of direction in the composition of population groups in elementary education (Figure 2). The change is evident since 2010 and it is mainly stabilized and slight signs of growth in the part of Jewish education and decrease in the part of Arab education.

The tendency in Arab education part of all ages we may point two periods: between 200 and 2009 from 24.2% to 28.2% and until 2014 there has been a decrease to 26.4%.

By population groups, study years 2000-2014.



\*the years point the year of the beginning of relevant study year

\*\*processed by the data of the ministry of education

Source: Nahum Blas and Haim Bleich, Taub center

Data: ministry of education

Figure 2. Distribution of 1st to 6th grades students. Source: Israeli Ministry of Education [2]

Like in other issues, the ministry of education is the most influential decision maker about the class size and is the one that determines what will be the class size for budgeting in kindergarten (33 children in cities without grants and 31 in cities entitled to balance reward), what will be the maximal class size in elementary school and in junior high (today it is between 40 to 32, depending of nurture index) and what will be the class size and work group for budgeting in high school. All these are subject to rules determining the maximal walking distance of a child from home to school and back. However, there are two additional factors practically influencing the class size in different

education stages and in different population groups. One is the political – ideological factor, i.e. the options that state give to different groups – state, religious-state, orthodox etc. to perform separated education systems, and the other factor is the demographic reality, number of children and their geographic distribution.

Most of the educational research that was done – and in Israel not much was done – dealt with the correlation between class size and students' achievements and not the correlation between socio-economic background data of educational institutes and class size. Even the last report of the ministry of education in the subject did not include data that might enlighten the subject.

The increase in the budget allowed partial performance of the section in the agreement signed with the teachers concerning the decrease of average class size – as we may see, the increase in class number was bigger than the increase in the number of students. The main increase in students' population between 2008 and 2013 was in elementary education due to increase in the annual number of children and in high school due to increase in studying rate with in the relevant annuals (at the same time increased the number of classes in elementary education in 16%). Although it is an important development in class size, it is still far from the goal announced few years ago (The results of the investment in reducing the class size, Nachum Blass, 2015, inequality in the education system: who opposes and who enjoys the gaps? [2]).

Table 1 clearly shows that the changes in class size in elementary education in the Jewish sector were very small. However, in the Arab sector there was a real progress and reduction was up to an average of about 3 students per class, i.e. about 10%.

Table 1. Average students in class in elementary education by sector and supervision type\*, 2006-2013 [2]

Supervision type	2006	2008	2010	2012	2013
Jewish orthodox	22.9	23.0	23.1	23.3	23.3
State	28.9	29.0	29.1	28.8	28.7
Religious – state	25.1	24.9	24.9	24.7	24.5
Arab – Bedouin	31.0	30.9	29.4	28.0	27.3
Druze	29.8	29.5	28.4	27.5	27.0
Arab	31.4	31.5	30.7	28.8	28.2

\*without special education

Table 2 describes the development in junior high. In the state and religious-state in Jewish sector there is a slight change, but it is quite negligible (4%) and it seems that the decreasing started in 2006 before they had to the agreement about reducing the students' number in class. In Arab sector the change is quite significant and arrives – like in elementary education – to about 9% to 10%. Therefore, the students' average number starts to be like in the Jewish state education.

Table 2. Average students in class in junior high education by sector and supervision type\*, 2006-2013 [2]

Supervision type	2006	2008	2010	2012	2013
Jewish- state	27.2	27.0	26.6	26.2	26.1
Religious – state	24.7	24.6	24.3	24.0	23.8
Arab – Bedouin	29.1	29.3	28.2	27.1	26.6
Druze	27.9	27.8	26.7	25.6	25.4
Arab	29.7	29.5	28.4	27.0	26.7

\*without special education

Therefore, despite the improvement in the Arab sector, the general decrease in the average number of students in class is not large. However, to gauge success of the mission we should check not only the averages but also the rate of classes that exceed the standard of 32 students along the years. Table 2 compares the classes distribution by size in 2008, 2013 and 2015 (the group of extra small classes – up to 10 students – include mainly special education classes, and the group of 40+ mainly include classes with wrong report. Therefore, the focus is mainly in the groups that are in the middle. The examination was made based on student's files to relevant years). In 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades there is reduction of 3-4% in the number of classes with 33 and more students (from 24.1% in 2008 to 18.7% in 2015), it is expressed in reducing classes in the range between 31 to 40+ students, and parallel increase of classes in the range of 20-30 students. It is interesting that the rate of classes in the range between 11 to 20 students almost did not change. In total, the number of standard classes (up to 32 students) rose during seven years in 4.5% (out of it 7.1% in very small classes, that as mentioned, are in special education).

However, in 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades the status has dramatically changed: the rate of classes of more than 32 students has dropped from 41.2% in 2008 to only 26.6% in 2015. However, the fact that over a quarter of all classes in these grades is still bigger than required shows that the way to complete the mission is still long.

1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grades and 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grades as a percentage of all classes in age group, including special education

Table 3. Distribution of classes by students' number in the years 2008, 2013 and 2015 [2]

Number of students in class	2008	2013	2015
1 <sup>st</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> grades			
Less than 10	7.7%	9.0%	9.4%
11-15	5.4%	5.9%	5.5%
16-20	7.4%	7.9%	7.5%
21-25	18.5%	22.8%	22.8%
26-30	26.4%	28.2%	28.0%
31-35	23.4%	19.1%	20.0%
36-40	10.5%	6.3%	6.3%
40+	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%
<b>Up to 32</b>	<b>75.9%</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	<b>81.3%</b>
7th to 9th grades			
Up to 10	10.9%	12.2%	12.9%
11-15	6.9%	7.7%	7.3%
16-20	5.8%	7.0%	7.0%
21-25	10.3%	13.9%	14.3%
26-30	15.7%	21.0%	21.9%
31-35	24.4%	25.7%	24.5%
36-40	23.0%	11.3%	10.6%
40+	3.0%	1.3%	1.5%
<b>Up to 32</b>	<b>58.8%</b>	<b>73.4%</b>	<b>74.4%</b>

\*without special education

### **Conclusions**

Despite the centrality of the problem of inequality and gaps in the education system, the resources allocation (financial and other) in the education system according to socio - economic status did not usually get a lot of attention from the research establishment in Israel, and the international researchers community as well makes relatively little empirical examines of the resources division between population groups differ from each other in socio-economic status characterization. This fact is quite surprising due to the vast scope of resources invested in education, and the number of studies that engage with the connection between resources of all types and the educational outputs. In Israel the relation tissue between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority is characterized in increasing tensions and in exclusion and negation relations [1] worsening of inequality may also cause a crisis and violence and create a threat upon the democratic character of the country.

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