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The Failure of Education Policy in Israel: Politics vs. Bureaucracy

Alexandra F. Leavy
University of Pennsylvania, aleavy@gmail.com

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Alexandra Leavy

University of Pennsylvania
Department of Political Science
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Thesis Advisor: Dr. Ian S. Lustick

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Introduction

  The Arab-Israeli Conflict is one of the most difficult, interminable conflicts facing not only the Middle East region but the entire world. Those most directly involved include Israeli citizens, both Jewish and Arab, and the Palestinians residing in the West Bank and Gaza. Additional groups also claim a vested interest in the conflict for various geographic, political, and religious reasons. These include Israel's immediate neighbors, Jordan, Lebanon, and Egypt; the Greater Arab world; the state of Iran; and finally, Jews living in the Diaspora. Considering the scope of this conflict and the failure of recent peace initiatives, it is vital that the international community look toward a future in which both the Palestinians and Israelis can reach an accord. It should not only be sustainable and enforceable, but also should come from within. Peace is not a reality that can be imposed from the outside. National leaders and ordinary citizens alike should be ready and willing to both abide by political agreements *and* coexist with the "other". This latter challenge presents the most difficulty because it requires significant societal change. Previous attempts at peace have foundered not just because of failed political leadership, but also because of greater societal resistance to peace. Palestinians and Israelis must overcome long-standing prejudices and beliefs in order to usher in a peaceful coexistence, and I suggest that education reform is the best way to achieve such a change.

  While this thesis provides thorough analysis of education reform in just one country, its conclusions have broader implications for others around the world. Since the beginning of the twentieth century and the end of the colonial era, nationalism and other ideologies such as Islamism have defined the essence of international politics. Nations in Africa, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East began to divest themselves of all colonial ties and embark on political struggles towards independence. While many nations have successfully gained status as

sovereign states, others have not yet fulfilled this dream. In many areas around the world, especially the Middle East, nationalist aspirations still drive much of the on-going political conflict. Because education is considered one of the foundations of national identity, it provides an ideal platform for analysis of the connections between nationalism, ideology, and politics within a particular country or region. Both the content of educational material as well as the political actors and circumstances that produce educational policy shed light on a nation's conception of its own identity and how the nation perceives itself relative to others. A short overview of the Arab-Israel Conflict, followed by a review of Israeli education policy and domestic politics, will enable me to draw conclusions about the factors that affect the introduction of coexistence education in Israel and offer suggestions about the general relationship between education and internal national politics.

A thorough study of education policy necessitates a brief description of Israeli society and the position of the Arab sector within it. When Israel was declared an internationally recognized state in 1948, the Arabs of Palestine became citizens of country whose creation they opposed. Today, they constitute close to twenty percent of the Israeli population, and many still consider the state's formation illegitimate. Professor Sammy Smooha of the University of Haifa conducted a series of surveys in 1984 assessing Arab attitudes towards the State and found a number of correlated figures. Only 50% of respondents recognized the right of Israel to exist unconditionally, while 21% rejected the right altogether and 29% "expressed reservations". In addition, 64% of respondents stated that the Law of Return should be repealed.[1] Lastly, only 47% of respondents expressed the sentiment that Arabs can be equals in a Jewish state and can identify with Israel as a Jewish state. This clear divergence between state-based Zionism and

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[1] The Law of Return, enacted through the Israeli legislative process, guarantees the right of all Jews and those of Jewish ancestry to migrate to the State of Israel and gain citizenship.

Arabs' conception of the State of Israel provides the basis for Israel's model of cultural

pluralism. The logic behind this model suggests that each population could theoretically maintain

its own culture through the creation of cultural enclaves.[2] This framework is readily apparent in

the structure of the Israeli school system, through which Arabs and Jews are educated in separate

state-run schools. However, Israeli society often fails to recognize and support this espoused

cultural plurality. On the most symbolic level, the national symbols of Israel represent Jewish

themes. The state flag bears the Star of David and the national emblem the Menorah of the

Temple. Even more, the national anthem, *Hatikvah*, recounts an historical struggle of the Jewish

nation.[3] At the same time, Arab cultural autonomy is discouraged, and nowhere is this more

evident than in Israel's schools and curricular materials.

Yet in spite of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, Israel continues to face a proverbial identity

crisis. In his book *The Jewish State: A Century Later*, Alan Dowty draws attention to a perennial

problem of nationalism – that all nation-states must balance their own universal principles with

the reality of a multicultural population. A nation is defined as "a people connected by supposed

ties of blood generally manifested by community language, religion, and customs, and by a sense

of common interest and interrelation."[4] Since ethnic boundaries rarely coincide with national

borders, Dowty suggests that the emergence of an ethnic minority is inevitable, and the outcome

is a society characterized by fractures along national, ethnic, and religious lines.[5] The ethnic

majority, in turn, often seeks to secure its national hegemony through the workings of

government institutions, in particular the education system. Ami Pedhazur fittingly views the

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[2] Orit Ichilov, *Political Learning and Citizenship Education under Conflict: The political socialization of Israeli and Palestinian youngsters* (London: Routledge, 2004), 102.
[3] Ibid, 101.
[4] Louis L. Synder, *Encyclopedia of Nationalism*, in Alan Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 209.
[5] Dowty, 209.

state education system as a socialization agent that always remains loyal to the state, ensuring that its citizens are educated in the spirit of its ideological beliefs and guaranteeing the legitimacy of the governing party. Israel, he claims, is a "non-liberal democracy" and therefore "places the interests of one group of citizens over those of other groups, encroaches upon the social sphere and restricts civil liberties."[6] H.A. Alexander concurs with this viewpoint and asserts that schooling in Israel has always been tied to ideology, whether it speaks to the divide between religious and secular Zionism or the national conflict between Arabs and Jews. As a result, schools have become "institutions of indoctrination rather than education."[7] This precedent was set with the establishment of Israel and the need to create three distinct streams of education without a true outlet for autonomous Arab education.

The organizational framework and overall mission of the Israeli education system are laid out in Article 2 of the 1953 State Education Act. National education is based on:

> the values of the Jewish culture and the achievements of science, on the love of the homeland and loyalty to the State and the Jewish people, on practice in agricultural work and handicraft, on *khalutzic* (pioneer) training, and on striving for a society built on freedom, equality, tolerance, mutual assistance, and love of mankind.[8]

These few lines alone allude to the conflict that arises between Jewish identity on one hand, and societal equality on the other. The Ministry of Education and Culture is highly centralized, run by one minister and two deputy ministers, and is responsible for a wide range of functions,

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[6] Ami Pedahzur, *The Israeli response to Jewish extremism and violence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 106-107.

[7] H.A. Alexander, "Education in the Jewish State" in Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (ed.), *Conflicting Philosophies of Education in Israel/Palestine* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 129.

[8] Randolph Braham, *Israel: A Modern Education System* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), 35.

including the allocation of funds to all state-run schools, planning of curricula and syllabi, and the implementation of all education laws and regulations.[9] Municipal and local governments also play a significant part in the administration of educational tasks and programming. What's important for this discussion, however, is the organizational structure of Israeli schools.

The 1953 State Education Act established three primary segments within the school system, each catering to the political demands of various groups within the Jewish population. The first of these segments consists of the secular state schools, which most Jewish students in Israel attend. These schools provide a basic secular education under the supervision of the Minister of Education and have no affiliation with political parties or groups outside of the government. While the secular schools do provide instruction in the Bible, Talmud, Jewish history, and the Hebrew language, the emphasis is on the inculcation of a Jewish consciousness rather than the formation of a Jewish lifestyle.[10] The second segment consists of religious state schools, which provide an education similar to that in the secular schools, however, "its institutions are religious as to their way of life, curriculum, teachers, and inspectors." The Minister, in coordination with the Council for Religious State Education, oversees the curricula and school programs. The curriculum in religious state schools is standard, though with some notable exceptions. First, religious schools dedicate more time to biblical and Talmudic studies. In addition, they instruct students in matters relating to religious life such as observance of rituals, recitation of prayers, and adherence to Talmudic law.[11] The last of the three primary segments consists of the *Agudat* Schools, which are independent schools run by the ultra-Orthodox community. While these schools are not directly run by the Ministry of Education and

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[9] Ibid, 37-38.
[10] Braham, 62.
[11] Ibid, 44.

Culture, they are eligible for state subsidies if they include Ministry-prescribed basic programming into their curricula.[12] Israel's tripartite educational system demonstrates the willingness of the state to accommodate religious and cultural heterogeneity within the Jewish community but at the same time neglect the autonomy of the Arab population entirely. The National Religious Party and the ultra-Orthodox community both demanded a stake in the education of their children and successfully obtained the institutional apparatus needed to secure this objective.

Thus, the Arab population faced the consequence of being an ethnic minority in a Jewish state. In 1949, the Israeli government passed two resolutions that would lay the foundation for the education of Arabs in the new Jewish state. The first mandated compulsory and free education for all Israeli children, both Jewish and Arab, and declared that Arabs would receive the exact same education as the Jews, regardless of the preexisting Arab educational institutions from the Mandate Period. The second, though somewhat controversial at the time, declared that Arabs would be taught in their own language in official state schools. As such, Arab students would be taught the same material as Jewish students attending secular state schools, but instruction would be in Arabic rather than Hebrew. It's important to note that the creation of the Israeli school system forced dramatic changes upon Arab education. To begin, the teachers were required to introduce a number of subjects previously not taught in Arab schools such as physical education, science, art, and music. In addition, the separation of boys and girls in the classroom was eliminated in many areas.[13] To make matters worse, though Arab education would be

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[12] Ibid, 27.

[13] Dr. Zvi Zamaret, "Fifty Years of Education in the State of Israel" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, July 14, 1998, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern%20History/Israel%20at%2050/Fifty%20Years%20of%20Education%20in%20the%20State%20of%20Israel)

objectively equivalent to that of the Jewish population, the nuanced nature of the material made it qualitatively different. Professor Rachel Hertz Lazarowitz, et al. of the University of Haifa highlights many of its inequities. Arabs are given thorough studies of Judaism and Israeli and Jewish history, while studies of Palestinian history and culture rarely exist in Arab schools. Additionally, the study of Hebrew language and literature is required in Arab schools, while the study of Arabic is an option available only in some Jewish schools.[14] These implicit but poignant distinctions substantiate H.A. Alexander's view that Israeli schools are institutions of indoctrination rather than education. The inculcation of Zionist Jewish values in even the Arab population was significantly more important than the preservation of ostensive cultural pluralism. Some provisions were made in the curriculum to accommodate the needs of the Arab community, incorporating the topics of Arab history and literature, the geography of the Arab world, as well as religion.[15] However, there was no attempt to include the Arab community in Israel's conception of itself as a nation, maintaining that Israel could simultaneously claim itself to be both a democratic and a Jewish country.

I. Civics Education in Israel

This paper has thus far only touched upon the function of schools as an outlet for the inculcation of national ideologies, but further examination of civics education in Israel will yield a deep understanding of the Arabs' position in the Israeli social setting. Orit Ichilov, et al. defines citizenship education as "institutionalized forms of political knowledge acquisition that take place within formal educational frameworks (such as schools and universities) and informal frameworks (such as youth movements)." In Western democracies, the objective of civics

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[14] Muhammed Amaraa, Faisal Azaiza , Rachel Hertz-Lazarowitz, and Aura Mor-Sommerfeld, "A new bilingual education in the conflict-ridden Israeli reality: language practices," *Language and Education* 23(1) (January 2009): 18.
[15] Braham, 91.

education is two-fold: to instill particularistic values such as patriotism and national pride, and to impart more universal, democratic values such as equality and tolerance.[16] Schools are expected to implement special programs designed to develop democratic citizenship and cultivate virtues that allow for disagreement and deliberation in a democracy.[17] But in Israel, nationalism unquestionably took precedence over universalism. There was a pressing need to strengthen the new state and overcome internal political and religious division, particularly while facing rival Arab countries on all of its borders. Accordingly, state education was completely de-politicized with a clear directive that political rivalries and controversies should be left out of schools.[18] Civics education focused exclusively on the procedural and structural aspects of the government, failing to address more controversial issues of civic importance. Questions relating to the definition of Israeli citizenship or the role of religion in Israeli society remained absent from the curricula. Even the Arab-Israeli Conflict was noticeably missing from curricular agenda; it was an optional school subject generally taught from the Zionist perspective. Overall, civics education was marginalized with respect to other subjects that highlighted the Jewish elements of Israeli nationalism, and this is evidenced by a number of structural and procedural realities. First, teachers received training in civics hand-in-hand with Jewish history; citizenship itself was not considered a discipline that required separate training. Also, the number of hours dedicated to teaching civics was strikingly low. The subject was not taught at all in elementary schools (grades 1-6). A middle school (grades 7-9) civics curriculum existed, but few schools taught it because the Ministry of Education did not enforce it. The first true civics course was not taught until the 11th or 12th grade, when teachers were preparing students for matriculation exams. But

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[16] Orit Ichilov, Gavriel Salomon, and Dan Inbar, "Citizenship Education in Israel – A Jewish-Democratic State," *Israel Affairs* 11(2) (April 2005): 304.
[17] Ichilov, 110-111.
[18] Ibid, 308.

even in the matriculation exams, civic studies constituted one course unit, while Bible studies, Hebrew, composition, and literature all constituted two units. As a result, the students learned each of the latter subjects for double the amount of time they learn civics.

But the question of whether or not curricular reform would affect students' political orientations determines the overall relevance of this discussion. Evidence shows that the existing civics curriculum has, in fact, detracted from societal cohesion across the Jewish and Arab sectors. A study cited by Ami Pedahzur was conducted in March 2001, assessing 729 Israeli students from northern Israel. Approximately half of the students were in 12th grade and had been exposed to a reformed civics curriculum, whereas the other half were in 11th grade and had not been exposed. The study tested whether or not the new curriculum would yield a greater inclination towards democratic principles and lower levels of political cynicism. Dependent variables included: democratic orientation, ethnocentric attitudes towards Arabs, political cynicism, political efficacy, and political knowledge, but this discussion will focus primarily on the first two. The results of the study were rather shocking in that exposure to the reformed civics curriculum had a negligible effect on many of the variables tested. Students in both groups supported statements that were democratically oriented, and most students expressed the belief that that the government has an obligation to protect minorities. On a more pessimistic note, both groups exhibited a tendency towards xenophobia, more than half opposing the protection of Arab minority rights and expressing hostility towards Arabs. On only one variable was there significant difference between the control and experimental groups: knowledge of the political system. [19] While these results are somewhat discouraging, they reveal the strengths and weaknesses that remain in Israeli civics education. It's clear that Israel has been successful in

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[19] Pedahzur, *The Israeli Response,* 109-114.

teaching the issues deemed important to national Jewish cohesion – knowledge of governmental structure and procedure as well as the basic values of democracy and citizens' rights. On the other hand, students across the board still harbor animosity towards their Arab counterparts and do not believe Arabs should have an equal role in Israeli society, despite their supposed belief that the government has the obligation to protect minority rights. The Israeli government has willingly abandoned matters of societal relevance, particularly those pertaining to the Arab population, and it is the objective of this paper to determine the factors, political and otherwise, that have prevented the implementation of a truly democratic education – one that would bring about a comprehensive change in Israeli attitudes toward Arabs.

II. Literature Review

A general consensus regarding the content of civics curricula persisted from the establishment of the national school system in 1953 through the beginning of the 1980's. The Mapai, which later evolved into the Labor party, dominated the first two decades of governmental rule in Israel and was able to maintain a governing coalition with the broad understanding that national unity trumped partisanship in the early state period. In Israel, this phenomenon was known as *mamlachtiut*, and it defined the beginning of the statehood as an era of political consensus and lack of party division in policymaking. However, this ideological consensus eroded in the 1970s, and many authors argue that this era marked the beginning of polarized politics in Israel. Their analyses, combined with theoretical views about the political nature of bureaucracy and the education system in Israel, suggest that proposals to reform the Israeli civics curriculum have failed due the salience of party politics in the government. This viewpoint is espoused not just by academics, but by mainstream journalists, politicians, and educators as well.

For the first decade of statehood, the Labor Zionists took at least half of the 120 Knesset seats throughout seven election cycles. Center-right parties took slightly less than one third, while religious parties took between twelve and fifteen percent of the vote. Alan Dowty attributes Labor party dominance to a number of factors that are characteristic of new statehood. First, in new states, there is widespread concern for national survival, and thus voters tend to stick to existing leadership. The Labor party was associated with the founding of the State, and nationalist sentiments had not yet faded. Second, mass immigration brought many newcomers to the state of Israel, and they were dependent on the government for basic necessities such as jobs, education, and healthcare. [20] Bernard Reich and Gershon Kieval agree with this line of reasoning, pointing out that the Labor party was able to translate this dependence into political support. They also note that there was unanimity across the political spectrum regarding both domestic and foreign issues. Domestically, Israelis were primarily concerned with the absorption of immigrants and economic growth and development. In terms of foreign policy, Israelis were universally concerned with state survival in the face of antagonistic Arab neighbors.[21]

However, a number of political developments ushered in broad changes in ideology. On May 18, 1977 Israelis witnessed what is now known as *hamahapach*, or "the revolution." For the first time voters ended the Labor party's dominance of Israeli politics and voted in the Likud, a right-wing party led by Prime Minister Menachem Begin. This signaled not only a realignment of the Likud party itself, which shifted closer toward the political center, but also a general shift of Israeli politics towards the Right. Since then, power has fluctuated between the center-Right and center-Left, essentially splitting the body politic. This trend is evident in voting patterns

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[20] Dowty, 69-70.
[21] Bernard Reich and Gershon Kieval. "Introduction: The Changing Center in Israeli Politics," in *Israel Politics in the 1990s: Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Factors*, eds. Bernard Reich and Gershon Kieval (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 9.

from subsequent elections. In 1981, Labor received 47 seats in the Knesset, while Likud received 48. In 1984, the parties were also closely divided, with Labor receiving 44 seats and Likud receiving 41. And in 1988, Labor received 39 seats, while Likud received 40.[22]

Dowty shares with Reich and Kieval a general consensus on the various reasons for the ascendance of the Likud and other right-wing parties. To begin, the 1967 Six Day War revived the right-wing nationalist agenda. Israel acquired territories associated with the historic land of Israel, bringing to the forefront issues of attachment to the land and the fundamental definition of Zionism. Menachem Begin and the Likud advocated for the retention of territories and the creation of settlements there. This policy stood in sharp contrast to that of the Labor party, which supported the exchange of territory for peace with the Palestinians and rejected any position that would preclude peace. Labor's policy was perceived as rather ambiguous and drove many Israelis to support its opposition. At the same time, Israelis perceived that the Arab countries presented no moderate voice and continued their calls for war. Such extremism made the Labor position less attractive to voters. The 1973 Yom Kippur also brought a dramatic shift in Israeli public opinion. The unanticipated Syrian and Egyptian attacks, combined with high casualty rates, shattered the public's confidence in the ability of the Labor party to lead the country and defend Israel's national security. According to Dowty, "Labor's leadership came to represent complacency, deterioration, and lack of clear direction." On the eve of the 1973 war, polls indicated that 60% of the Israeli population perceived Israel's situation to be positive. Following the war, however, this figure dropped to between 10 and 20% and remained there through the 1977 elections.[23] These political developments were also accompanied by demographic trends that were not promising for the Labor party. Israelis of European origin, or Ashkenazis,

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[22] Ibid, 4-5.
[23] Dowty, 103-104; Reich and Kieval, 9-11.

overwhelmingly supported the Labor party in elections and comprised the majority of the Israeli population for the first two decades of statehood. However, in the 1970s, Israelis of Asian and African origin, or Mizrahis, became the majority and tended to vote for Likud with at least 60% support beginning in 1977. Their sudden defection was due to Labor's abandonment of its broad social agenda as well as the Mizrahi tendency to identify with Likud's traditional type of Judaism.[24]

Historians and other academics have thus demarcated 1977 as a transformational year in Israeli politics – one that would completely alter the political process. According to Uri Ram, a sociologist at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheva, Israel, there has been an ideological spilt in Israeli nationality between "Israelis" and "Jews." He remarks:

> In political terms this refers to the decline of the old unifying Zionist nationalist identity, and to the emergence of two mutually antagonistic alternatives: a liberal, secular, post-Zionist civic identity, on the one hand, and ethnic, religious, neo-Zionist nationalist identity, on the other.

This divide has significant implications for how each group defines Israeli democracy. Post-Zionists seek to maintain democracy by separating national identity from cultural and ethnic identities and believe that political loyalties are defined by geographic boundaries. Neo-Zionists, on the other hand relegate notions of democracy and promote the same Jewish ethno-nationalism that defined the earlier Zionist movement.[25] In practice, Post-Zionists are active in left-wing political parties and promote a more inclusive concept of Israeli identity. Conversely, Neo-Zionists are active in right-wing parties such as the Likud and the National Religious Party and

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[24] Reich and Kieval, 14-15.

[25] Uri Ram. "National, Ethnic, or Civic? Contesting Paradigms of Memory, Identity, and Culture in Israel," in *Conflicting Philosophies of Education in Israel/Palestine*, ed. Ilan Gur-Ze'ev (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000), 44.

offer their allegiance to the Jewish people rather than the Israeli state. Ram firmly believes that this split has both destroyed democratic ideals within Israel and contributed to Arab-Israeli antagonism. "Neo-Zionism is…an exclusionary, nationalist, and even racist, and anti-democratic political-cultural trend, striving to heighten the fence encasing Israeli identity. It is fed by, and in turn feeds, a high level of regional conflict and a low level of global integration."[26]

Abraham Yogev, an associate professor at the School of Education and Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel-Aviv University, writes about similar trends in what he refers to as the "postmodern era" in Israel. It is characterized by the absence of any single dominating ideology and the emergence of competing ideologies that all espouse their own subjective truths. This development has contributed to the "erosion of the central dominating ideology that strove to create a 'melting pot' in a country that was in the process of nation-building." As such, groups are now willing to challenge the establishment and question the role of the state in education. Even more, Yogev believes that the mass media and wide availability of information have intensified these debates and increased political polarization between various groups, particularly in the field of educational policymaking.[27]

Ram and Yogev do not stand alone in their belief that Israelis have become increasingly polarized over time. Asher Arian, who taught political science at Tel-Aviv University, the University of Haifa, and in the United States, asserts that outside events always have and continue to influence Israeli political attitudes. People tend to shift their positions further towards the directions in which they were already leaning. This was evident in a study that gauged the

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[26] Ram, 57-58.
[27] Abraham Yogev. "Bringing Order to Chaos? Educational Policy in Israel in the Postmodern Era," *Israel Affairs* 7, no. 4 (2001): 210-213.

effects of the First Intifada on Israeli political opinions.[28] 416 Israeli Jews were interviewed twice – once in December 1987 at the outbreak of the Intifada and once before the November 1988 election. The percentage of those that supported territories for peace increased from 34% to 41% at the same time that the percentage of those opposed to negotiations with the PLO also increased, from 37% to 46%. Support for the Labor party remained the same, while support for the Likud party jumped from 34% to 41%. The study also connected the responses to party affiliations. Those who claimed that the Intifada was more likely to harden their political views identified with the Right, while those who claimed the Intifada was more likely to soften their political views identified with the Left. In addition, those who reported that the Intifada influenced their vote choice indicated that the uprising only reaffirmed their established party affiliations.[29]

The increasing polarization of the Israeli populace has a direct effect on both the workings of government institutions and the politicians themselves. The founders of Israel established a parliamentary form of government that favors majoritarian politics. Parties do not single-handedly achieve a majority in elections but establish a "workable majority coalition" in order to carry out their legislative agenda. Thus, once a majority coalition of a particular ideological persuasion is elected to the Knesset, a shift in decision-making occurs, and the Knesset has relatively little ability to effect policy once an election has taken place. This is a consequence of the fact that the act of policymaking itself falls in the hands of cabinet ministers,

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[28] The First Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza lasting from 1987 to 1993. The aims of the uprising were twofold: to end the occupation and to see through Palestinian self-determination with the creation of an independent Palestinian state in
[29] Asher Arian. "Toward the 1990s in Israeli Politics, in *Israeli Politics in the 1990s: Key Domestic and Foreign Policy Factors*, eds. Bernard Reich and Gershon Kieval (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 48.

who are appointed by the governing coalition and its leading party.[30] Here lies an important implication of Israel's system of governance. There exists virtually no outlet for the expression of a minority viewpoint. Minority parties in the Knesset do not have representation in the cabinet and therefore have no hand in the policymaking process. Consequently, the election of a right-wing coalition will produce more hard-line policies, and the reverse holds true for the election of a left-wing coalition. This explains the ability of the Mapai to maintain a hold on education policy for the first several decades of Israel's existence; its members controlled the majority coalition in the Knesset throughout this period and therefore controlled the various cabinet ministries.

Peter Medding, a professor of the history of Zionism and the State of Israel at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, explains this tendency in his book *Mapai in Israel: political organization and government in new society*. He describes politicization of government institutions as:

> the degree of permeation of other sectors of society by the political, and in particular, by party…the degree of their dependence upon parties, the extent to which their activities are subject to political control or direction, their leaderships penetrated and their organizations permeated by those loyal to political parties.[31]

Consequently, the head of a bureaucratic entity – for the purpose of this paper, The Minister of Education – is not merely a bureaucratic official but also a political figure. This can become problematic when political party criteria pervade recruitment processes or affect internal

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[30] Dowty, 68.
[31] Peter Y. Medding, *Mapai in Israel: political organization and government in a new society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 221.

decision-making too greatly.[32] The possibility looms that the Minister and those serving under him could cater to the interests of a particular party or group and disregard society at large.

Similarly, Haim Gaziel, a professor of educational policy and administration in the School of Education at Bar Ilan University in Israel, outlines several theories on the subject of educational policymaking in order "to explain, understand, interpret, and organize data concerning the making of decisions by public bodies such as government."[33] The conventional view states that the key elements in policymaking are those involved in elected institutions – both the body politic and those elected to represent them. Representatives theoretically have two functions: to be accountable to the public and to control the executive bodies. In most Western countries, the parliament has a role in formulating policy, but Gaziel acknowledges that in Israel there is much debate regarding the actual influence of the Knesset on policymaking.[34] If one refers back to Medding's argument, it becomes clear that the Knesset has little power other than to merely appoint cabinet ministers. Yet another view underscores the role of political parties in policy formation. They mediate public opinion and use elected institutions to formulate policies. Therefore, party activists are at the heart of policymaking, while party leaders translate those policies into action. Gaziel believes this approach accurately describes Israeli educational policy because government generally acts in conformity with the policies of the party in power. This line of argument implies that cabinet ministers in Israel often form policies on the basis of party recommendations and can bypass the Knesset at will. As such, education policies will swing back and forth on the ideological spectrum, depending upon which party is in power.

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[32] Ibid, 223.

[33] Haim Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking in Israel's Education System* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 1996), 4.

[34] Gaziel, 4.

A third view of educational policymaking buttresses Medding's argument that policymaking can become quite political, even at the bureaucratic level. This bureaucratic power view suggests that government institutions, especially ministries and local government authorities, are the key element in policymaking. This is due to the fact that most policies have to pass through them and they often generate policies themselves. In either case, bureaucratic bodies are creating or significantly influencing the shape of public policy. [35] Because cabinet personnel turns over with every change in government, it is not surprising that political parties can greatly influence, even if indirectly, the formation of policy. The last approach to educational policymaking is known as the interest group view and characterizes society as being made up of various interest groups such as unions, businessmen, and parents' association. While some are organized into concrete institutions, others are amorphous and merely comprise a defined set of individuals. Some scholars argue that policy forms as a response to the demands of certain interest groups - even if it counters the interests of society at large - because politicians and officials act in accordance to the demands of those groups in power.[36] This viewpoint ostensibly ignores the role of political parties in the policymaking process, but if one views parties as agents of interest groups who bring their demands from the public sphere to governmental institutions, then parties still wield considerable power. Gaziel proposes that any one of these actors can play a primary role in policy formation, depending on one's perspective. Yet they all support what he calls the political model of policy implementation, which assumes that elite group values are dominant. Policies that do not follow the ideological bent of the elite are bound to fail, and schools are therefore expected to carry out the ideological imperatives that permeate the national

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[35] Ibid, 5.
[36] Gaziel, 6.

culture.[37] All educational initiatives are thus constrained by the ideological tendencies of the

parties in power, regardless of whether they are expressed by members of the Knesset, cabinet

ministers, interests groups, or the parties themselves.

Abraham Yogev provides a direct link between Israel's major ideological split in the

1970s and its manifestations in the education system. He explains that the statist principle, or

mamlachtiut, guided educational policy in the first four decades of the Israel's existence, calling

for a centralized education system that decided upon all relevant matters including school

administration, the curriculum and the types of norms and values that the system ought to

promote. It reflected the Zionist framework of building both a people and a nation

simultaneously and the need to create a common identity.[38] Yet according to Israeli scholars

Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, *mamlachtiut* was also an indirect reflection of party

politics in Israel. David Ben-Gurion, leader of the Mapai, championed the statist cause in order

to garner support from the right-wing and delegitimize his partisan opponents who were closely

associated with rival political parties. "In such terms the state served as its own justification and

the ruling party portrayed itself essentially as the state-party."[39] Thus, Ben-Gurion could claim to

be "above politics" in order to ensure his party's ascendancy and control of Israeli governmental

institutions such as the education system.

During the 1980s and 1990s, however, Yogev writes that "serious rifts began to emerge

in this basic principle as it underpins educational policy in Israel. The declining status of statism

in educational policy…relate[d] primarily to the crisis in the central ideology and the growth of

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[37] Haim Gaziel, "Implementing Reforms in a Centralized Education System: The Case of Israeli Education," *Oxford Review of Education* 20, no. 2 (1994), 239.
[38] Yogev, 228.
[39] Shulamit Carmi and Henry Rosenfeld, "The Emergence of Militaristic Nationalism in Israel," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 3, no. 1 (Autumn 1989): 18.

sectoral polarization."[40] Yogev's focus on polarization supports the aforementioned theories that emphasize the role of political parties in the policymaking process. They all carry the assumption that competing political groups create a barrier to the smooth implementation of educational policy. *Mamlachtiut* dominated educational policy in the first several decades of statehood because of Mapai's effective hold on the Israel political system, but the erosion of national consensus brought with it dissonance in educational policymaking. Yogev briefly cites several instances of this trend that occurred in the most recent decades. In the early part of the 1980s, the National Religious Party controlled the Ministry of Education, and officials gave preferential treatment to the state religious schools in terms of budget allocations and staffing decisions. Their actions prevented the full implementation of previous initiatives that had been geared toward the secular state schools. In 1996, the National Religious Party once again gained control of the Ministry and withheld funding for implementation of the Shenhar and Kremnitzer Commission reports, which sought to reform Judaic and civic studies respectively.[41]

Recall the arguments of H. A. Alexander, assistant professor of Philosophy and Education at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. Again, he contends that schooling in Israel has always been tied to ideology, whether it speaks to the divide between religious Zionism and secular Zionism or to the national divide between Arabs and Jews. As a result, schools become "institutions of indoctrination rather than education."[42] Accordingly, when particular parties have gained control of the Ministry of Education, their supporters have reaped the benefits. As stated earlier, following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Labor party lost support among Israeli voters, and the Likud was voted into power with a right-wing coalition. Labor had

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[40] Yogev, 228.
[41] Ibid., 229-230.
[42] Alexander, 129.

already introduced the Integration Reform in 1968 in order to close achievement gaps amongst Israel's various ethnic groups and encourage social integration. Yet the political reversal in 1977 slowed down its implementation because the new government chose to fund neighborhood renewal programs rather than the reform.[43] Even more, as a favor for joining the Likud government, the ultra-Orthodox were able to glean funding for their independent schools through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. And Shas, a new ultra-Orthodox party founded by North African Jews, demanded funding for its schools, child-care centers, and family services.[44] These examples only touch upon the ways in which party politics can directly affect decisions made within the Ministry of Education in terms of both educational policy and resource allocation.

Not surprisingly, there is an overwhelming belief in the Israeli public sphere as well that partisanship is one of the primary obstacles to education reform. The mass media provide a forum for those academics and politicians who espouse this viewpoint. On November 4, 1999 Gil Hoffman of the *Jerusalem Post* wrote an article entitled "Sarid abolishes unit for values education." In it he refers to the department for values education established by Minister Zevulun Hammer of the National Religious Party in 1996. Yossi Sarid, a member of the left-wing Meretz party, later closed it during his term as minister ostensibly to expand other programs initiated by the department. Though Hoffman quotes Sarid's reasons for his decision, he also includes a number of comments from both Sarid's supporters and his opponents that demonstrate the political sensitivity of the issue. Former education minister Shulamit Aloni of Meretz referred to Sarid's actions as an end to the "indoctrination of the NRP….It was all a ploy by Zevulun Hammer to insert brainwashing into the schools, but it didn't succeed." On the other hand,

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[43] Miriam Ben-Peretz, "Educational Reform in Israel: An Example of Synergy in Education," in *Case Studies in Education Change: An International Perspective*, eds. David S.G. Carter and Marnie H. O'Neill (Washington, DC: The Falmer Press, 1995): 92.
[44] Alexander, 134.

Benzion Dell, who was Director General of the Ministry of Education at the time the department

was established, flatly rejects Sarid's reasoning and states that it was "not serious."[45] Several

years later, Minister of Education Yuli Tamir of the Labor party introduced an initiative that

would bring a "shared life program" for Jews and Arabs into Israeli public schools. Yousef

Jabareen, a Palestinian civil rights lawyer in Israel, wrote an article for the Common Ground

News Service, reporting that current education minister Gideon Sa'ar of the Likud party "has

frozen implementation of the recommendations, and instead is advocating a new mandatory

'Jewish heritage and culture' program…"[46] Jabareen's wording and tone suggest that Sa'ar, as a

member of the Likud, has abandoned the initiative put forth by the Labor party and replaced it

with one that is more representative of Likud party values. The politics of education policy even

extends beyond the media and into the work of those trying to change the educational status quo.

Mike Prashker, the Director of Merchavim, a nongovernmental organization dedicated to the

advancement of a "shared citizenship" in Israel, commented in a recent interview on how politics

directly influences his work strategies. He willingly shared that his organization tries to work at

the professional level - not with ministers and other high-ranking officials - because the process

is too politicized.[47]

 Israel's polarizing party structure combined with the highly political nature of its

governmental system - in particular the Ministry of Education - provide convincing evidence that

parties politics alone can account for the state's failure to introduce a more democratic and

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[45] Gil Hoffman, "Sarid abolishes unit for values education," *Jerusalem Post*, November 4, 1999, http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/jpost/access/46115789.html?dids=46115789:46115789&FMT=ABS &FMTS=ABS:FT&date=Nov+4%2C+1999&author=GIL+HOFFMAN&pub=Jerusalem+Post& edition=&startpage=03&desc=Sarid+abolishes+unit+for+values+education.
[46] Yousef Jabareen, "An equal Arab-Palestinian education in Israel," *Common Ground News Service-Middle East*, October 8, 2009, http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=26506&lan=en&sid=0&sp=0.
[47] Mike Prashker, interview by author, transcription, June 16, 2009.

universal civics education program. While Mapai operated under a highly politicized system of government, the latter's effects were intensified by subsequent polarization at the political level. The 1970s brought the end of *mamlachtiut* – and with that an end to the consensus about the meaning of Zionism and the role of the state in national education. Regional wars and violence have continually fueled the growing divide between the right and left wing factions of the Israeli political spectrum; it is therefore difficult to expect that tensions on these particular issues have subsided. But a more detailed look into the history of Israeli education policy reveals that party politics alone is not to blame for the repeated failure of reform proposals. In fact, three case studies demonstrate that while politics has been a factor preventing the implementation of reform, a number of other factors stemming from the decentralization of the school system also played a significant role.

III. CASE STUDY: The Reform (1968)

The first major attempt to reform the Israeli school system occurred in 1968, just fifteen years after passage of the legislation that first created it. Commonly known in Israel as the *Reforma*, this initiative sought to both raise the level of academic achievement and close wide gaps between various social and ethnic groups in Israeli society. While the Reform did not address this paper's focal issue of civics education, it bears significance for a number of reasons. First, it is historically one of the largest educational reforms to pass through the Knesset to date. As such, it provides a useful lens through which to evaluate general educational policymaking in the State. Second, its detachment from the issue of civics education allows for an objective analysis of the policymaking process and eliminates the possibility that civics reform is inherently different than other reform proposals in terms of implementation.

The 1953 State Education Act created a largely centralized education system and put forth goals on which the system would be based, namely achievement, equality, and liberty. The achievement ideal would be fulfilled through the establishment of selective secondary schools and universities that based admission on academic merit. Equality would be reached through the uniform distribution of inputs such as financial resources, curricula, length of the school day, class size, and teaching methods. Finally, liberty would be realized in the ability of parents to choose which stream of education is best suited for their children – state secular, state religious, or ultra-Orthodox. The ultimate objective was to create a unified and equitable education system for all Israeli citizens. In reality, however, the equality principle had the opposite effect. It produced glaring disparities between ethnic and social classes because the more affluent segments of the population were better able to make use of given resources.[48] Aharon Kleinberger, a professor at the Hebrew University School of Education, published a study in 1969 that laid out these differences in numerical terms. While 37.5% of Ashkenazi children passed the eighth grade survey examinations, only 21% of Mizrahi children passed. Of those who passed the exams, 52% of Ashkenazi children enrolled in secondary schools, while only 38% of Mizrahi children who did equally well enrolled. Even more, Professor Sammy Smooha found that in the academic year 1968/1969, Ashkenazi enrollment in higher education was seven times that of Mizrahi enrollment.[49] There was also widespread discontent with the high rates of failure and dropouts following elementary school. As early as 1959, in a speech to the Knesset regarding the education budget for the approaching school year, Minister of Education Zalman

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[48] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 63.
[49] Ibid, 65-66.

Aranne acknowledged the reasons behind the gaps in educational achievement, citing ethnic homogeneity in schools, poor teacher quality and the policy of formal equality in schools.[50]

Convinced that major reform was needed to advance educational opportunity and equality, Zalman Aranne embarked on what seemed like a personal mission to bring change. Towards the end of his first term in office, he introduced a public committee to explore the status of schools in terms of their structure, curricula, and other programs. At the opening session on July 5, 1957, Aranne laid out his vision for reform. "Before the committee decides what it wants, let me tell you what I want the committee to consider." Two of his main recommendations were the restructuring of the school system to include junior high schools in addition to elementary and secondary schools, and the extension of free, compulsory education to the tenth grade. Aranne carried this mission through to his second term, appointing the Rimalt Committee in the Knesset in 1966 with the express purpose of deliberating these same two reform proposals. In1968, the committee submitted its recommendations to the Knesset body and endorsed the extension of compulsory education by two years as well as a complete restructuring of the school system.[51] Instead of having an elementary school of eight grades and a secondary school of four, there would be an elementary school of six grades, a junior high school of three grades, and a high school also of three grades. In addition, the introduction of new district boundaries would change the ethnic and socioeconomic composition of schools throughout the State. As stated above, the purpose of the Reform was twofold. First, it would provide for social integration between the Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jewish populations. Second, it would improve the academic achievements of those students coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The Reform

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[50] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 64.
[51] Orit Ichilov, *The Retreat from Public Education: Global and Israeli Perspectives* (New York: Springer, 2009), 69-70.

would be implemented by preparing new curricula, adjusting the training of teachers, constructing new buildings, bussing students to accommodate new boundaries, and improving counseling services. Minister Yigal Allon proclaimed in 1973 that full implementation should take no more than ten years.[52]

At the time, Allon and his colleagues did not foresee the barriers that would later stand in the way of the Reform. Recall the writings of both Peter Medding and Haim Gaziel, who argue that party politics is the driving force behind policymaking. They assert that party leaders are the agents responsible for turning party positions into actual policy and that the government generally complies with the policies of the party in power. Considering the political consensus that existed prior to 1977, it comes as no surprise that those heading the Reform initiative were confident it would be implemented smoothly. And according to Shlomo Swirski, author of the book *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States*, the Reform did enjoy the support of all the major political parties. The Knesset committee responsible for passage of the Reform included representatives from across the political spectrum. The committee head, Elimelech Rimalt, was a leading member of the liberal faction of the Likud party. Moshe Una represented the National Religious sector, while Minister Aranne himself represented the Labor party and the socialist brand of Israeli politics. "The combination of these three forces gave the reforms of the 1960s the equivalent of that would be called wall-to-wall bipartisan support in the United States." The Reform was also passed without major opposition from the Mizrahi and Arab populations, which is most likely attributed to their understanding of the need for accommodation in the growing state.[53] When the Minister took the committee's

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[52] Gaziel, Implementing Reforms, 242.
[53] Shlomo Swirski, *Politics and Education in Israel: Comparisons with the United States* (New York: Palmer Press, 1999), 191.

recommendations for a direct vote in the Knesset, it received 70% support.[54] In 1973, the

Institute for Educational Leadership at the George Washington University sent a study mission to

Israel that later compiled a report entitled "Impression of Education in Israel." George Kaplan, a

mission participant and official in the U.S. Office of Education, commented on governance and

change in Israeli education. He notes that problems in Israel are national in scope, and education

is therefore a highly centralized institution. The Knesset manages the system and gives

mandatory directives to the Ministry of Education. If the Knesset education committee is unable

to determine the best policies for the State, the Minister then assumes this role himself. Kaplan

states rather assuredly, "Israeli education is a highly political process; its leadership is political,

and Israeli politics is based in Jerusalem. There is talent and dedication in the hinterland, but

power is in the capital."[55] Kaplan did not sense any inclination towards decentralization because,

in his view, a strong central structure was necessary in a state like Israel, which lacked

geopolitical security. His report demonstrates how to objectively perceive the Israeli education

system during the 1968 Reform. It was still a centralized institution, governed by the reigning

political party, which at the time, held broad national support. It was too soon to anticipate

potential obstacles to implementation, so much so that Minister Aranne did not even seek to

bring the Reform through the formal legislative process. Although the reasons behind his

decision are not clear, one can speculate that Aranne wanted to avoid the Knesset's lengthy

legislative procedures. He also presumed that support for the Reform would stand the test of

time. In his 1971 book *The Toil of Education*, he writes, "I'm confident that neither the

Government nor the Knesset will ever support proposals that are aimed intentionally or

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[54] Gaziel, Implementing Reforms, 242.
[55] George Kaplan, "Governance and Change in Israeli Education" in *Impressions of Education in Israel*, eds. Sharon Enright and John Shulz (Washington DC: The George Washington University, 1973), 85-86.

unintentionally at the eradication of the Reform."[56] The Minister surely did not foresee the 1977

political upheaval and other developments that might impose obstacles on the implementation of

his initiative.

Yet, with the passage of time, it became clear that implementation of the Reform was

slower than had been expected. During its first year (1969/1970), thirty-two junior high schools

had been created, with only 11% of the relevant age group attending the new schools.[57] By 1981,

the latter figure jumped, with 56% of Jewish children and 48% of Arab children attending junior

high schools.[58] As of the 2002/2003 school year, five hundred junior high schools had been

created, but only 73% of the relevant age group had been enrolled.[59] Even today, the Reform has

not reached full implementation, and the Ministry of Education expresses no willingness to see it

through. There are still other cases in which the Reform has been implemented on the surface yet

schools have found ways to circumvent the policy. In the 1970s, researchers at Tel-Aviv

University, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Bar-Ilan University conducted several

major studies on the Reform. They found that the creation of junior high schools did promote

more years of schooling, but at the same time, there had been no improvements in the

educational achievements of disadvantaged students.[60] It turns out that schools used ability

groupings to divide students into classes within schools, which often resulted in de facto

segregation of Ashkenazi and Mizrahi students. One notable case occurred in the metropolitan

city of Tel-Aviv, which has a strong Ashkenazi population in the northern part of the city and an

equally strong Mizrahi population in the south. The municipality conducted an evaluation of its

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[56] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 70-72.
[57] Ibid, 80.
[58] Gaziel, Implementing Reforms, 242.
[59] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 70-72.
[60] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 70-71.

schools, and the results were reported in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* on October 14, 1988.

The text explicitly read, "…in spite of the [reform] and the busing of pupils from South to

North…children of Edot Hamizrah and low-income strata remain in segregated classes and there

is no encounter between them and pupils from higher socioeconomic strata or Edot Ashkenaz."[61]

The policy of school integration had in fact been applied in Tel-Aviv, but individual schools

were able to maintain old practices by separating students into different classes ostensibly based

on merit. The reality is, however, that academic achievement is generally correlated with ethnic

background, and as a result, students were once again divided by ethnicity. Another shortfall was

manifest in the physical infrastructure of the new schools. The State Comptroller's Report issued

in 1974 notes that while 143 junior high schools had been built by the 1973/1974 school year,

many of them were found to be incomplete or inadequate. Some did not have the proper

equipment, while others were still in use despite various building malfunctions. The Ministry did

not respond in any significant way to the report, possibly out of public embarrassment or the

report's failure to recommend major reconsiderations of the policy.[62]

      The continuous failure to achieve real results with the Reform led one Member of the

Knesset (MK), Yehuda Perah of the Likud party, to propose a complete policy reversal. As a

former Central District inspector for the Ministry of Education, he concluded that the Reform

had failed to meet its stated objectives. He found that children of affluent parents neither lost nor

gained, while the children of less affluent parents were thoroughly disadvantaged. Moreover,

only those Mizrahi students coming from privileged socioeconomic backgrounds improved their

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[61] Swirski, 195.

[62] Nachum Blass, "The Evaluation of the Educational Reform in Israel: A Case Study in Evaluation and Policymaking," *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 8 (1982): 15.

educational achievements.[63] Forty years after passage of the Reform, it has yet to reach full execution. Considering the extensive support it received from across the political spectrum, we cannot assume that polarizing party politics slowed its implementation. Other factors must have been responsible; a step-by-step analysis of the policymaking process reveals how those factors not only affected this particular proposal, but may have affected others as well.

The Reform began with Minister Zalman Aranne, who was so confident in the proposal's broad and long-lasting support that he neglected to bring it through the legislative process. To make matters worse, the Rimalt Committee never specified a concrete deadline for implementation. As such, the failure to legislate opened the door for a number of loopholes that allowed the government, administrators, and other parties to impose obstacles on the reform's implementation. Nor did Aranne foresee the changing interests and imperatives of forthcoming governments, leaving the Reform vulnerable to the discretionary actions of future education ministers. The failure to legislate was not only characteristic of Zalman Aranne's reform initiative; it set a distinctive trend for future educational reforms in that several significant reforms, particularly those related to civics education, were launched independently of the legislative process. As a result, they were introduced by the Ministry of Education but were all constrained by the lack of legal enforcement behind them. Thus, if an educational reform is proposed by the Ministry via a public committee or the Minister himself but is not legislated by the Knesset, there is a strong likelihood that its implementation will weaken over time.

A number of theorists support the notion that various actors collectively shape and influence the course of education policy; in other words, policy outcomes cannot be directly attributed to one party or institution. In his article "Implementing Reforms in a Centralized

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[63] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 68-69.

Education System: The Case of Israeli Education," Haim Gaziel lists a number of models that

account for the failure to implement education reforms. The first is the classical-technical model

in which the "relationship between the policymakers and policy-implementers is assumed to be

hierarchical, and unidirectional top down." It is therefore expected that reform policies adopted

by the top bureaucratic levels will be carried out with adequate administrative and supervisory

support from the lower levels.[64] This is the outlook most likely adopted by Zalman Aranne,

Yigal Allon, and even George Kaplan of the U.S. government, who all presupposed the

uninterrupted implementation of the Reform. However, evidence suggests that multiple factors

contributed to its failure, and the competing view, or the "loosely-coupled" perspective, best

describes this phenomenon. This model posits that education systems are composed of sub-units

(local authorities, districts, schools, and classrooms) that are relatively autonomous and

unresponsive to decisions of other levels of the school system. Cooperation between

policymakers and policy-implementers must therefore be negotiated, as each unit has control of

certain resources.[65] Similar to this perspective is the Miriam Ben-Peretz's "synergy theory." The

Merriam-Webster Dictionary broadly defines synergy as "combined action or operation."[66] In

the context of education reform, Ben-Peretz regards the concept as "combined or correlated

actions of a group of factors, or organizations, which may yield desired consequences…"[67]

Though the case of the Reform may have brought undesired consequences - at least for the

Minister and his supporters – her theory appropriately accounts for the combined actions of

various parties and their ability to influence final outcomes. Ben-Peretz herself lists eleven

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[64] Gaziel, "Implementing Reforms, 238.
[65] Gaziel, "Implementing Reforms," 239.
[66] "Synergy," in *Merriam-Webster Online* (February 1, 2010), http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/synergy.
[67] Ben-Peretz, 86.

different factors that may have contributed to, or prevented, implemented of the Reform, but

arguably one of the most influential groups in stopping the Reform in particular was the parents

of Israeli schoolchildren.

The role of parents in the education system can be traced back to the 1953 State

Education Act, which specifies the various functions of the Ministry of Education. They include,

among other duties, planning national curricula and syllabi and supervising the pedagogical

activities of all official schools. As one would expect, the Ministry is also charged with the

implementation of all educational laws and regulations. Municipal and local governments, on the

other hand, have a distinctly administrative role. They do not control the pedagogical course of

their schools but instead oversee the construction and maintenance of school buildings and

provide a number of school services.[68] While the State Education Act unquestionably

strengthened the hand of the central government in determining educational content, it also

allotted a small degree of autonomy to the parents through the provision of "supplementary

programs" for official educational institutions. Parents can determine up to 25% of the material

taught to students. Additionally, the 1974 regulations of the Director General of the Ministry of

Education state that parents ought to have a significant role in formulating the pedagogic

environment of schools. Parents' organizations are legal entities that receive funding from the

Ministry of Education and serve as representatives to the State and local authorities and teachers.

In response to significant budget cuts, which are discussed in more detail below, and their legal

right to take hold of their children's education, parents began paying teachers to instruct students

outside of official class hours. Because they were forced to pay more for education services,

parents wanted to partake in school programming, and their involvement took a number of

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[68] Braham, 37-39.

different forms. Many were found striking at a school to force the dismissal of a principal or to express opposition to a new curricular offering. Others organized into groups to oppose certain proposals. In the case of the Reform, many parents appealed to the Supreme Court to contest the placement of their children in integrated schools.[69] Middle-class parents from central cities such as Petach Tikva, Nahariya, Rehovot, and Kfar Saba often staged vocal demonstrations, and the Israeli Supreme Court responded fervently, stating that integration was "not a punishment…but a national mission of the first priority." Parents from the religious sector were also adamantly opposed to the new integration policy and were able to acquire exemptions from the Ministry for the ultra-Orthodox *Agudat* Schools, which were already given a large degree of autonomy due to their status as "recognized" schools.[70] Again, these schools are outside of the official school system but are eligible for 75% of ordinary state funds if they abide by certain core curricular requirements. Other ultra-Orthodox schools are completely exempt from state control but are still eligible for up to 55% of funding.[71] Those supporting the Reform were mainly upwardly mobile parents living in low-income neighborhoods. Former Minister of Education Aharon Yadlin, who served in this position from 1974-1977, made the following comments about the initiative's progress: "Parents' opposition to integration has been increasing of late and there is a danger that the Ministry of Education may succumb to their pressure."[72]

Beginning in the early 1980s, the Ministry did in fact lose control in the face of growing parental involvement. Parents increasingly began to register as nonprofit organizations associated with particular schools, and according to a study conducted by Bar Simon-Tov and Langerman, 104 of these schools existed by 1984. This led to the phenomenon known as "gray

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[69] Gaziel, "Implementing Reforms", 56.
[70] Swirski, 194-195.
[71] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 84.
[72] Blass, 22.

education," which is best defined as parentally financed supplementary classes. A study was done by a Master's student at Bar-Ilan University in the 1987/1988 school year which analyzed the effect of the Reform on gray education. Rishon Lezion and Bat Yam are two cities in Israel with similar composition and population size, however, integration was only implemented in the former. The researcher found that private lessons were more common in Rishon Lezion than in Bat Yam, even though the number of total classes were increasing in both. These private classes offered instruction in not just the supplementary subjects but the mandatory ones as well, including mathematics, English, and Hebrew. [73] This study provides evidence that integration reform made education accessible to those students who previously did not have access, but also made the affluent children more competitive. Thus, they were able to maintain an advantage over the low-income students through private instruction. Parents clearly had a decisive role in implementation of the Reform. They not only used private funds to ensure that the educational gaps between social gaps would remain, but were also quite vocal in their opposition to reform proposals. In all likelihood they also played a key role in the creation of the internal tracking systems that emerged in ostensibly integrated schools.

Gray education has remained a part of the Israeli school system, even through the end of the last century. In 1994, it was reported that 63% of Israeli schools received private funding for some type of instruction, while in 1988 this figure only stood at 38%. And even more, the majority of these schools were found in middle-class neighborhoods, while only one third were found in low-income areas.[74] In a 1989 Knesset debate on the subject, MK Michael Bar-Zohar asserted in defiance, "We'll have one form of education for the rich and another for the poor." In response, Minister of Education Yitzhak Navon defended its legality.

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[73] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 76.
[74] Swirski, 230.

> Let us not forget that gray education is essentially a supplementary curriculum,
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> recognized by the 1953 State Education Law. As long as it is confined to
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> supplementary subjects instead of compulsory ones, it isn't illegitimate under the
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> present circumstances.[75]

The Reform, once again, prompted a trend that would remain in the education system and prevent the implementation of future educational reforms. The gray education phenomenon allowed parents to determine the extra-curricular programs used in their children's schools and has since given them strong influence in dictating whether or not certain programs are brought to those schools. This would have significance for later reforms pertaining to civics education and coexistence education programs because parents, rather than the Ministry of Education, would ultimately decide where and how those curricula were taught. Even more, because those reforms were never legislated into law, schools were under no obligation to use those curricular programs in their classrooms. While parents were certainly aggressive in their efforts to oppose the Reform, and in particular the integration policies, they were also assisted by simultaneous cuts in the education budget, which inevitably had an effect on policymaking.

Beginning in the early 1980's, regular cuts in the education budget became the norm. From the years 1980-1986, the mean annual decrease amounted to .3%. And in 1985, an emergency stabilization program worsened all of the previous cuts with a further 16% decrease in education spending. National expenditure stagnated until 1990, when the budget was raised to accommodate large-scale immigration from the former Soviet Union; but even then, per-capita expenditure only reached the level it had been in 1980.[76] This trend continued into later years as well. From 2001 to 2005, more cuts resulted in an overall 12% decrease in spending, even

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[75] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 75.
[76] Swirski, 228.

though the total number of students rose by 7%.[77] All levels of education were affected by these reductions, but elementary and junior high schools were hit the hardest. Specifically in junior high schools, teaching hours were cut by 7% per class and 18% per pupil, despite an almost 30% increase in enrollment.[78] Thus, budget cuts affected not only classroom hours but classroom size as well, which stands in direct opposition to the policies of the Reform. Those municipalities that neglected to take action in response allocated their resources to other services such as welfare, project renewal and culture instead. While local authorities cut education budgets by 5%, they increased culture allocations by 37%.[79]

The 1968 reform bill inevitably suffered because it was itself an expensive initiative. It called for both the expansion of existing schools as well as the construction of new junior high schools. In addition, it promised to raise the quality of teaching by improving national teacher training programs. The curricular changes and additions needed to accommodate the new structure would also cost a large sum of money. Rachel Elboim-Dror, a professor of Education and Culture Policy at Hebrew University, conducted a study of legislative activity related to education, culture, youth, and childcare from the years 1965-1977. She found that implementation of laws passed by the Knesset was often postponed due to repeated legislative amendments to the bills themselves. The causes were numerous, ranging from lack of necessary personnel and faulty administration, to inaccurate assessments of the resources and infrastructure needed for implementation. This is a consequence of the fact that there is a large gap between

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[77] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 83.
[78] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 109.
[79] Ibid, 113.

governmental aspirations and the organizational and administrative tools at their immediate disposal.[80]

Zalman Aranne was only in office for one year following the passage of the Reform and therefore could not control forthcoming budget allocations. But even if he were in office for a longer period of time, he could have faced further complications involving the Ministry of Finance, which essentially regulates the demands and requests of the Ministry of Education – as well as other cabinet ministries – because there are limited available resources. The budget director in Finance gives to his counterpart in Education a budget ceiling, along with recommendations for allocations. Meanwhile, the budgeting division within Education prepares a separate budget, and these two agencies meet to negotiate a final budget for referral to the Knesset.[81]

Haim Gaziel writes that budget is the best reflection of education policy because every change in policy should be reflected in resource allocation for various sectors and disciplines of education. The plausible reasons behind the sudden drop in national education expenditures are numerous and beyond the scope of this paper, but acknowledgement of the shift in budget allotment is nonetheless important. Parents were forced to assume the responsibility of paying for their children's education, which not only perpetuated existing gaps between Israel's ethnic groups but also augmented the expansion of semi-private and autonomous schooling. The share of central and local government expenditure on education as a percentage of total cost dropped from 84% in 1979/1980 to 77% in 1987/88. The next figure, which indicates that household

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[80] Rachel Elboim-Dror, "Some Features of Education Legislation in the Knesset," in *Educational Administration and Policy Making: The Case of Israel*, eds. E. Ben-Baruch and Y. Neumann (Herzlia: Unipress Publishers, 1982), 60-61.
[81] Rachel Elboim-Dror, "Main Education Policy-Making Actors," in *Educational Administration and Policy Making: The Case of Israel*, eds. E. Ben-Baruch and Y. Neumann (Herzlia: Unipress Publishers, 1982), 28.

expenditure on education as a percentage of family income almost doubled from 1984 to 1994, surely accounts for that discrepancy.[82] The government hence placed an enormous burden on those families that could not afford to provide private funds for supplementary educational programs. More significantly, this phenomenon of decentralization naturally made it more difficult for the Ministry to enforce the policies put forth by the Reform bill and would make it more difficult for the Ministry to enforce any of its policies in the future. This was evident in a new educational agenda that emerged in the form of privatized education.

In his book *'National Education' through Mutually Supportive Devices: A case study of Zionist education,* Hebrew University professor Yuval Dror discusses the evolution of autonomous education in Israel. Autonomy itself is defined as "the quality or state of being self-governing."[83] But in the context of education, Dror explains that autonomy "relates first of all to the learner, but also to the teacher, to the school, to the local authority and the district, reflecting decentralization of planning and autonomy in the implementation of curricula." This definition seems simple and rather obvious but is crucial to understanding the ability, or lack thereof, of the Ministry of Education to enforce the implementation of the Reform and other national education initiatives. Dror continues with a brief explanation of the "School Autonomy Project" launched between 1988 and 1992. Led by Ministry officials, school supervisors, and members of the academia, the project steering committee developed three models for school autonomy based on both international literature and its own findings. The first model consists of schools with special content – arts, science, environment, and society to name a few. The second model consists of schools with particular ideological orientations such as Labor movement values, Conservative

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[82] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 105.
[83] "Autonomy," in *Merriam-Webster Online* (February 3, 2010), http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/autonomy.

Judaism, and others. The last model is based upon schools that use a unique educational approach. Democratic schools, for example, have recently gained significant ground in Israel. There are six components through which these schools can base their autonomous pedagogical models: a distinctive school policy, or credo; independent organization and teamwork, i.e. the school system; school-based curriculum development; community involvement; evaluations based on the individual school's goals; and budgetary flexibility and independence.[84]

This project and other supportive governmental actions produced two major educational developments in Israel: magnet schools and parental choice. Magnets schools were the successor to the gray education trend that began in the early 1980's. Middle and upper-middle class parents took advantage of the position they had gained when the government significantly cut education budgets and established schools that offered distinct curricula and used strict selection criteria for admissions. They were able to circumvent national laws and guidelines by securing "recognized" status for these schools, as the ultra-Orthodox had done for their *Agudat* schools. While magnet schools charged large sums of money to the parents, they also received considerable funding from the State. But as Orit Ichilov notes, "such massive changes proceeded without proper legislation and penetrated state education via legal voids, establishing practices that clearly subvert the original intentions of legislators.[85] For similar reasons, many opposed the development of magnet schools, including principals, teachers, and legislators; they thought the schools would interfere with social integration and strengthen mainstream groups at the expense of disadvantaged ones. Haim Gaziel points out that magnet schools directly violated a number of government policies that emerged out of the 1968 Reform. First, they had a policy of open

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[84] Yuval Dror, *'National Education' through Mutually Supportive Devices: A case study of Zionist education* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2007), 159-160.
[85] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 84-85.

enrollment with no geographic boundaries. In addition, to nominally support the principle of

integration, the Ministry handed the responsibility of integration over to school principals but at

the same time enacted no mechanism for enforcement. Ministry officials supported these de facto

changes in policy because they understood that parents were dissatisfied with low scores on

national achievement tests. While legislators representing peripheral social groups questioned

Ministry officials in Knesset debates, the latter tended answer vaguely and generally "overlook

the contradiction between the Ministry's democratization policy and the intrinsic danger it

presented to the government's integration policy."[86] In 1982, the Knesset education committee

asked Minister Zevulun Hammer to justify the Ministry's financial support for the transfer of

children from Maale Hahamisha and Kiryat Anavim, two *kibbutzim* near Jerusalem, into a

segregated school. He responded in kind, "According to the reform guidelines, each local

authority has the right to decide which schools are preferable for its juvenile population."[87] Some

might argue instead that Minister Hammer was influenced by his party and simply refused to

enact a policy initiated by a Labor government, but according to Shlomo Swirski, this was not

the case, as the Reform had received wide support from both major political parties in the

Knesset, Likud and Labor. The National Religious Party, of which Minister Hammer was a

member, was also active in its support of the Reform.[88]

Consistent with the fact that official legislation on the Reform was never brought to the

Knesset for debate, later governments supported the movement towards abandonment of the

Reform through the establishment of their own parliamentary commissions. The Volunsky and

Gafni Committees, appointed in 1992 and 1993 respectively, submitted recommendations

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[86] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 78-79.
[87] Gaziel, "Implementing Reforms", 243.
[88] Swirski, 229.

regarding the changing nature of State schools. They promoted the autonomy of State schools first by confirming the duty of principals to act as school managers. He or she would retain the ability to hire and fire teachers as well as contract agencies and services. They also confirmed that schools would be able to develop their own credo, curricula, and school-based evaluations. Finally, the committees encouraged schools to raise funds from nonpublic sources, such as parents, NGOs, and sponsorships. This last recommendation had serious implications for school pedagogy because parents and donors could then demand a say in the content of school programming and curricula. For example, on March 26, 2006, *Ha'aretz* reported that stock exchange authorities demanded the introduction of a new subject into the schools they supported: learning about the stock exchange and why it is worthwhile to invest in the stock markets. According to Orit Ichilov, principals follow these demands for two reasons: first they believe the businesses' investment in their school is a testament to their own managerial abilities, and second their schools become dependent on the resources they are receiving.[89]

The Kashti Commission, appointed by Labor Minister Yitzhak Navon in 1989, affirmed the connection between the development of school autonomy and the failure to implement the 1968 Reform. The express purpose of the commission was to evaluate how magnet schools could be kept open while still maintaining the policy of integration. Left-wing members of the Knesset and representatives from the largest teachers' union had been pressuring their right-wing counterparts for allowing the expansion of magnet schools, specifically because integration had not been completed. At the time of its publication, the commission report indicated that 35-40 open enrollment schools had been serving between 10,000 and 15,000 students at the elementary and junior high school levels. Commission members concluded that Israeli society was less

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[89] Ibid, 87-89.

willing to support programs that help the disadvantaged and less concerned with maintaining a cohesive society. Self-imposed segregation along community lines was stronger and was certainly manifest in the educational sphere, as open enrollment and parental choice in schools likely reinforced this trend. The Commission recommended that activities of magnet schools be supported, as long as they uphold the policies of integration. Ministry officials would oversee the process so that homogenous schools do not emerge. In essence, schools would maintain autonomy in both pedagogy and administration but would be forced to adhere to enrollment districts and quotas for disadvantaged students who demonstrate aptitude and interest. It seems as though the Kashti Commission presented a viable compromise to allow for the continued existence of magnet schools and at the same time uphold the policies of integration. However, a follow-up study conducted by Shapira and Haymann concluded that the measures endorsed by the Kashti Commission had only a negligible effect. In Tel-Aviv, for example, only 30% of students in magnet schools belonged to disadvantaged groups, despite efforts to bring further integration. In addition, admission of these students based on quotas had a stigmatizing effect within the schools themselves. Therefore, even more control mechanisms would need to be put in place to ensure true social integration.[90]

School autonomy has thus shifted power from the Ministry to individual principals on a number of levels. The latter now have the final say in determining whether or not to implement integration in their classrooms. Because parents, particularly those in middle and upper class neighborhoods, often oppose the placement of their children in integrated classrooms, principals feel obligated to submit to their demands, especially as parents have become vital to the financial sustainability of schools. Also, the ability of the principals to determine the educational goals and

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[90] Gaziel, *Politics and Policymaking*, 79-82.

curricula of their schools has implications that extend beyond the Reform of 1968. There is no longer a mechanism to enforce the implementation of national mandates that involve curricular and other pedagogical changes. Civics education initiatives have been sitting on the proverbial backburner because those supposedly national changes were only given extra-curricular status. Principals could therefore decide at will whether or not to bring them into the classroom. Even more, these initiatives were never legislated into a binding mandate; thus the Ministry could not enforce their implementation. These initiatives will be discussed in further detail in the latter portion of this paper, but the connection to school autonomy is an important one.

Parental choice is a separate but related development of the 1990s. Previously, children were sent to specific schools within their enrollment districts, depending on the stream (secular, religious, or ultra-Orthodox) their parents had chosen for them. But under the new system of "controlled choice," parents could choose from among a certain number of educational institutions and were asked to rank them in order of preference. The final decisions, however, rested with the local authorities. The assumption was that authorities would take into consideration parents' preferences but also ensure that those schools were heterogeneous according to both socioeconomic and scholastic criteria. The reality of the situation, though, is that principals did not want to face angry parents and thus gave priority to their wishes.[91] Consequently, measures to increase individual opportunity actually decreased social justice as a whole and created a virtual hierarchy of schools dependent on parents' socioeconomic background. Evidence shows internationally that privatization reforms can create more academically and ethnically homogenous schools because parents prefer to enroll their children

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[91] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 89-90.

in schools that are of the same racial group as their own.[92] Again, the development of parental

choice and the government's subsequent support of the practice directly countered the objectives

of the 1968 Reform. The initiative sought to create multicultural and more equitable educational

environments for all of Israel's schoolchildren but instead favored those whose parents come

from more privileged, mainstream backgrounds. For future reform initiatives, parental choice

intimates that the parents, rather than the Ministry, will be the ultimate factor in deciding the type

of curricula for their children. One on hand, they can choose schools with school policies or

credos in line with their own ideologies. On the other hand, in order to remain competitive,

schools will comply with parental demands in terms of curricula and other practices. Hence, if

parents are not in favor of democratic educational reform, schools are not likely to support their

implementation.

Still, into the early 2000's many Israelis were not satisfied with the quality of education

in their country. The Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* published an article citing a study conducted in

2004 by the TNS/Telesqer Company, showing that over two-thirds of the citizenry regarded the

environment, education, and governing institutions as also "mediocre" or "not good."[93] In this

disapproving atmosphere, Likud Minister Limor Livnat appointed the Dovrat Commission for

the express purpose of mending a "deep crisis" in education and ensured that no additional

funding would be required to implement its recommendations. In its report, the Commission

listed a number of feature failures - low academic achievement, administrative deficiencies, and

significant academic gaps on the basis of socioeconomic and ethnic background – and sought to

launch an educational overhaul that supposedly addressed each of these shortcomings by using

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[92] Ichilov, *The Retreat*, 47-48.
[93] *Ma'ariv*, "Majority of Israeli Dissatisfied With Quality of Life, Authorities' Functioning,"
May 18, 2004.

school grades as the central motivational tool. But in the opinion of Hadas Lahav, a writer for *Challenge: A Magazine Covering the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, the overhaul still neglects the issue of closing social achievement gaps. "…because of its ideologically-driven push for achievement, the program may easily wind up deepening the very social gaps it is supposed to reduce." First it perpetuates the concept of intra-school tracking by creating a core program that divides students into three levels of academic ability. It also upholds the principle of school autonomy by delegating approximately 90% of school budgets to individual principals, who are only responsible to their respective regional educational administrations.[94] Lastly, the Commission recommended that the Ministry abolish the junior high schools the Reform established to mend these same problems. As such, principals still are the ultimate determining factor in matters involving classroom integration and supplementary curricular programs. To this day, there is no means to enforce an initiative passed over forty years ago. Despite the perseverance of Minister Zalman Aranne and his colleagues to institute a reform that sought to improve educational standards and mend broader social problems, he could not foresee the school decentralization phenomenon that would make it more difficult to implement not only the Reform but also other educational initiatives originating from the Ministry of Education.

Recalling Miriam Ben-Peretz's "synergy theory" for education reform, the collective action of various parties is responsible for the success or failure of a change in policy, and as major stakeholders in the educational process, teachers were also one of several groups Ben-Peretz identified as part of the opposition to the 1968 Reform. Elementary school teachers viewed the proposal as a threat because with the creation of new junior high schools, their

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[94] Hadas Lahav, "The Dovrat Report: Populism and Elitism Will Not Mix," *Challenge*, September/October 2004, http://www.hanitzotz.com/edu/Dovrat-Report.html.

position would lose status within the academic community.[95] More specifically, *Histadrut Hamorim* (the Teachers' Federation), representing 100% of elementary school teachers, believed that it would lose prestige to *Irgun Hamorim*, or the Union of High School Teachers. Shalom Levin, an influential member of the Labor party at the time, led *Histadrut Hamorim* and threatened to leave the party for another that had split from it. This was enough for Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to postpone implementation of the Reform.[96] Though later elections confirmed the strength of the Labor party, thereby allowing Minister Aranne to continue with the Reform, this incident demonstrates the weight of external factors on the policymaking process. External political threats were deemed innocuous due to the wide-reaching support of the major political parties, but a member of Aranne's own party represented the larger threat, even causing the Prime Minister to rethink the proposal.

The support of teachers is crucial in education policy because they are directly responsible for bringing policy changes to the students. Professors Amos Dreyfus and Yossef Mazouz conducted a study evaluating the connection between teachers' perceptions of curricula and their performance in the classroom. Though they interviewed teachers about a new curricular program entitled "Science of Life and Agriculture," they were able to identify teachers' primary areas of concern when generally assessing curricula. They are, in descending order: the requirements of the Ministry of Education; the teaching materials developed by the curriculum team; characteristics of the individual teachers such as their opinions and beliefs, teaching styles, and training; and characteristics of the students such as their interests and motivations, level of

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[95] Ben-Peretz, 90.
[96] Swirski, 192.

academic training, and heterogeneity of the student group.[97] Amos and Mazouz concluded, "the perceptions, beliefs, and concerns of the teachers seem to influence their performance and attitudes at all stages of curriculum implementation," revealing that the ability and readiness of teachers to implement a new curricular program may not correlate with their willingness to do so.[98] In the case of the Reform, teachers' opposition to the proposal may have stopped them from using the new curricula developed for junior high schools and may also have encouraged them to pressure their principals against bringing integration into their schools. In other words, they could have used non-implementation as a means of silent protest.

The Reform therefore demonstrated that teachers shape the policymaking process at two different levels. First, they can use their organizational influence to advocate for or against a particular policy in the Knesset. Second, they can affect implementation at a more localized level by personally refusing to implement the reforms or encouraging their principals to do the same. In later instances of civics education reform, teachers played an integral role in the non-implementation of experimental and optional curricular programs. Many of them refused to teach the curricula either because they personally did not believe in the principles of the reforms or they felt uncomfortable addressing such controversial and emotional topics in the classroom. Teachers therefore establish on a micro-level whether to implement any type of reform because they, unlike the Ministry of Education, are the actual agents of transmission in the educational sphere.

IV. CASE STUDY: Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program (1985)

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[97] Amos Dreyfus and Yossef Mazouz, "Probing Teachers' (Dis-)Satisfaction with a Curriculum By Means of Unstructured Interviews," *Studies in Education Evaluation* 14(1988), 252.
[98] Ibid, 245.

Following the 1967 War and Israel's acquisition of the West Bank and Gaza, the rise of territorial issues revived the Right's nationalist agenda. After the 1973 Yom Kippur War, disappointment in Israel's performance forced Israelis to question the viability of Labor leadership. And in 1977, for the first time since the establishment of the state, Israelis elected a center-Right government to the Knesset under the leadership of the Likud party.[99] The ascension of the Likud invited a slew of issues that divided the electorate, but most importantly, there was a growing "intolerance of opponents" on the political front. More specifically, the Arab populations in both Israel and the Occupied Territories were growing, and national leaders made a concerted effort to reinforce Zionism's Jewish roots.[100] This trend was best typified by the rising popularity of the Kach Party, which was known for its particularly racist views. In a guest column written for the *New York Times*, Kach leader Rabbi Meir Kahane unequivocally articulated his party's views and objectives.

> Few Israelis or Americans recognize the potential contradiction between a Jewish state and a Western-style democratic one…For me, the moral answer lies in annexation of all the lands and the completion of an exchange of populations begun in 1948, when more than 700,000 Jews fled Arab lands. For the sake of survival…let us carry out the second stage: The removal of Arabs in the Land of Israel to their own Arab Lands.[101]

The party's popularity was understood to be a reflection of public opinion, and Israeli policymakers consequently feared the prospect of a declining Israeli democracy.[102]

Regular acts of discrimination occurring throughout the country were indicative of the widespread intolerance of the Arab population. A series of infamous events taking place between

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[99] Dowty, 103.
[100] Ibid, 111.
[101] Meir Kahane, "For a Jewish State, Annex and Expel," *New York Times* (July 18, 1983).
[102] Dowty, 116.

the mid-1970s and mid-1980s caused alarm amongst the more mainstream Israeli public. In June 1980, the Jewish Underground formed and attempted the assassination of three Arab mayors in the West Bank. In July 1983, Israelis witnessed an attack on the Muslim College in Hebron and the planting of explosive devices in Hebron area mosques. In April 1984, extremist Israelis attempted to blow up six buses packed with Arab passengers, and finally, Rabbi Kahane of the Kach party was elected to the Knesset that same year.[103]

Survey research confirmed the prevalence of both non-democratic and anti-democratic attitudes in Israel, especially amongst high school students. A major research project funded by the Van Leer Institute in 1984 followed the attitudinal trends of Israeli 11th and 12th graders and illustrated the salience of the Zionist-nationalist ethos. 27% of students declared it legitimate to limit Israel's democracy in order to prevent opponents of the government from expressing their views in public. 42% supported limiting the rights of all non-Jews, while 60% denied Israeli Arabs' right to full equality.[104] A 1978 study conducted by Ofira Seliktar of Haifa University showed that an even larger number of 11th graders (52%) opposed the political rights of Israeli-Arabs.

From this information, a number of conclusions could be drawn. First, one quarter of students held consistently non-democratic views, while only one-third held strongly democratic views. The largest group of students held mixed or confused feelings. Even more, the aforementioned reports did not take into account ultra-Orthodox *Agudat* schools, which comprised about 10% of the population and tended to espouse largely anti-democratic views.[105]

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[103] Julia Resnik, "Particularistic vs. Universalistic Content in the Israeli Education System," *Curriculum Inquiry* 29, no. 4 (1999): 504-505.
[104] See Appendix A
[105] Benyamin Neuberger, "Education for democracy in Israel: Structural impediments and basic dilemmas," *International Journal of Educational Development* 27 (2007): 293-295.

Polls published by *Israleft: Bi-Weekly News Service* on July 10, 1085 show that religious

students, more so than their secular counterparts, aligned with Kach party ideology. 42.1% of

Jewish high school students "[agreed] with the ideas of the Kach movement and Rabbi Kahane

regarding the Arab minority," while an even larger percentage of *Nahalim Yeshiva* students

(64%) expressed their agreement with the Rabbi and his party.[106] Meir Kahane won 1.2% of the

vote in the 1984 election – enough to get one seat in the Knesset – but this vote was twice as

high among Israelis in the military, indicating that he gained the majority of his support from the

younger segment of the Israeli population.[107]

Both policymakers and common citizens alike were increasingly concerned about the

future of democracy in Israel. Society as a whole began to take measures to counter the influence

of extremist leaders. The Israel Broadcasting Authority boycotted the Kach party and banned its

leaders from appearing in the media. The Knesset passed legislature to prevent the party from

taking part in future elections, and the Ministry of Education announced changes to school

curricula that, for the first time, emphasized the democratic needs of the State over its

nationalistic ideal.[108] This was a response to the great deal of scrutiny the Ministry had received

for its role in the socialization of the nation's children. In their book *The Educational System of

Israel*, Yaacov Iram and Mirjam Schmida state that role of school curricula is twofold: to

"provide an educational means to convert ideology into social objectives, and to facilitate

individuals' needs and intellectual mastery." Any changes in curriculum therefore reflect

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[106] *Israleft: Bi-Weekly News Service* (July 10, 1985), p.6.
[107] Edward Walsh, "Israeli Teachers Learn an Explosive Subject; Once-Skirted Issue of Jewish-Arab Relations Is Met Head-On," *Washington Post* (February 1, 1985), p. A21.
[108] Ami Pedahzur, "The paradox of civic education in non-liberal democracies: the case of Israel," *Journal of Educational Policy* 16, no. 5 (2001): 422.

changes in educational philosophy or social milieu.[109] Benyamin Neuberger further argues that

the role of education in a democracy is to "teach coexistence, tolerance, cooperation,

compromise, and the capacity for at least some rational choice." This in turn builds a political

culture such that the people are moderate, participate in the political process, and can contribute

to the democratic foundations of the State.[110]

However, it was clear from the proliferation of anti-democratic actions and attitudes

that the State of Israel had failed to educate its children in this way. The 1953 State Education

Act mentions ideas such as "liberty" and "tolerance", but the concept of democracy was notably

left out of the legislation, as were other concepts such as the rule of law, human rights, and

minority rights. At a 1953 conference on civics education, Minister of Education Ben-Zion Dinur

expressed the belief that the Ministry could not ignore the looming sense of threat felt by all

Israelis since 1948. He remarked, "The position of our country must form the underlying premise

of the civil education system. The State of Israel was born after a long and difficult struggle. It

was established in the midst of a civil war. The struggle still continues…" Thus, the first decade

following the creation of the State invited a commitment to *mamlachtiut* and to the creation of a

uniform national curriculum with the ultimate goal of transmitting national culture and instilling

a sense of solidarity. In adherence to these guidelines, the topic of Jewish-Arab relations was

completely left out of Israeli education. At the same conference cited above, the Superintendent

for Arab affairs protested the exclusion of content covering Arab-Israeli relations because it

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[109] Yaacov Iram and Mirjam Schmida, *The Educational System of Israel* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1988), 113-114.
[110] Neuberger, 293.

created ignorance and misconception amongst the Israeli population. Though he and his colleagues lobbied for the addition of a section on Arabs, their plea was left unanswered.[111]

It is for this reason that the Ministry of Education was largely blamed for children's ignorance of Israeli history and growing extremism. Following Israel's lackluster performance in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Israeli public criticized the Ministry for its abandonment of Arab history and the history of the Arab-Israeli Conflict, and in fact, small changes were made directly in response to such criticism. Many believed the State would be able to strengthen children's identification with the Zionist cause if they were taught about their Arab neighbors. Accordingly, new curricula and textbooks were developed with the explicit purpose of strengthening Zionist identity. New mandatory topics assigned to the secular curriculum reflected this clear objective: the Jewish national movement and the establishment of Israel, major [Diaspora] Jewish communities in recent times, and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. The latter was later dropped from the history curriculum and placed into the civics curriculum, where it became an optional topic. But according to Elie Podeh, a Research Fellow at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace, there were still a number of shortcomings in the new curricula. To begin, there was no balance between Arab and Jewish sides of issues; events and facts were portrayed from a distinctly Zionist perspective. Even more, the aim of the textbooks remained the same - to strengthen the Jewish claim to the land rather than become truly familiar with the other side.[112] Yaacov Iram and Mirjam Schmida see eye to eye with Podeh, stating:

> The asymmetry in which the teaching objectives for the Israeli-Arab conflict were formed is most prominent. For Jewish students it is biased in order to strengthen the

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[111] Elie Podeh, *The Arab-Israeli Conflict in Israeli History Textbooks, 1948-2000* (Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 2002), 31-33.
[112] Ibid., 45.

identification of Jewish students with the Zionist movement…It is presented to the Arab

student in a balanced manner to strengthen his understanding of both national

movements…[113]

Halleli Pinson of Ben-Gurion University also points out that the new civics curriculum was only

studied for three weekly hours in the one year prior to the matriculation exam.

With the status of civics education as such, the Ministry was forced to reevaluate its

policies, and in 1984 Director General Eliezer Shemu'eli introduced the Education for Jewish-

Arab Coexistence Program for both secular and religious state schools. The Ministry released a

Special Paper outlining the new program's purpose:

> The education system calls for a comprehensive, extensive, and constant educational
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> action for reinforcing democratic values in the education we provide…There is a need to
>
> develop among our students the ability and the willingness for co-existence despite the
>
> differences between us. Educators should act constantly to abolish prejudice among
>
> students.[114]

It seems that the Ministry finally recognized its role in the democratic process, pushing

educators, as Benyamin Neuberger would recommend, to teach ideas such as coexistence,

tolerance, and cooperation. For the first time, the Israeli education system adopted a more

comprehensive approach to democracy, focusing on a universal rather than particularistic

definition of the State and allowing non-Jews to share in Israeli citizenship. Without these

changes, Israeli schoolchildren would continue to be uninformed about the sociopolitical issues

facing the State.

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[113] Iram and Schmida, 103.

[114] Halleli Pinson, "Inclusive Curriculum? Challenges to the Role of Civic Education in a Jewish and Democratic State, *Curriculum Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (2007): 358-359.

A number of components were introduced as part of this broad program. First, the Ministry encouraged encounters between Arab and Jewish students based on knowledge and respect for the other cultures. This would help students eliminate anxieties and dispel negative stereotypes. Second, The Ministry recommended teaching Arab history, language, literature, and culture throughout all levels of education. Lastly, it suggested that all existing curricula and textbooks be reviewed with the intent to delete and amend all text breeding stereotypes and prejudice. Implementation of the program was to take three years with assistance from the Van Leer Foundation in the preparation of textbooks and curricula.[115] Education Minister Yitzhak Navon also created the Division for Democracy and for Coexistence to oversee the entire project and dedicated the school years 1986/1987 and 1987/1989 to education for democracy.[116]

In 1989, as part of the new initiative, the Minister formed a new curriculum committee for civic studies with the aim of creating a new, more democratically oriented curricular program. The committee's ultimate recommendation was to create one unified curriculum for all state high schools, including the secular, religious, and Arab sectors. More specifically, it asked that the education system promote a more inclusive notion of civic education because the Ministry had failed to do so thus far. Some officials in the Ministry regarded the proposed changes as an opportunity to unify the various groups in a divided Israeli society, while others viewed them as necessary for avoiding internal civil conflict between those groups. One official indicated in an interview that he viewed the changes as a means to create a common political identity amongst Israelis.[117] Though right and left wing policymakers had differing viewpoints and priorities regarding the education of children, Benyamin Neuberger notes that the extremism

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[115] Podeh, 50-57.
[116] Resnik, 505.
[117] Pinson, 359-361.

of 1984 remained in the past because most understood its implications. "One has to overcome the notion that education for democracy is politically partisan and equivalent to indoctrination. Education for democracy is political, but not party-oriented."[118] Like the 1968 Reform, the Ministry's Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program had far-reaching support across Israel's political spectrum. Thus, partisan debate over the merits of the program would not halt passage of the proposal, especially because, once again, the measure was not legislated before the Knesset.

Yet evidence of the initiative's failure abounds. In the 1992/1993 school year, the Ministry introduced yet another program on the topic of the Arab citizens of Israel. It was one of four optional subjects presented to teachers as part of the civics curriculum. The mere introduction of such a program implicates the failure of the Ministry to adequately integrate the topic into educational programming even after the establishment of the Division for Democracy and for Coexistence. To make matters worse, the Ministry provided no textbooks or teaching aids for the topic, and as a result teachers rarely chose to teach it.[119] The triviality of civics education also continued to manifest in survey results into the 1990's. A 1996 survey of democratic, nationalist, and racist attitudes among high school students in twenty-six different countries (mostly European) put Israel at the bottom of the scale, indicating that the Ministry had failed in its effort to inculcate democratic values in the country's youth.[120]

Yet Ministry officials understood, even before then, that it had made little progress in the promotion of civics education. In March 1995, Minister of Education Amnon Rubinstein appointed the Kremnizer Committee to understand the nature and causes of the problems in

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[118] Neuberger, 304.
[119] Podeh, 57.
[120] Neuberger, 295.

civics education and address these problems with proper changes to the system. The committee was also charged with reviewing existing curricula, textbooks, and other publications related to citizenship and comparing them to those of other Western countries. Experts of all kinds were invited to participate, including university professors, civics education teachers, representatives from advocacy and educational organizations, and student and parent boards. The committee presented its final report to the Ministry in February 1996 with an extensive list of recommendations.

To begin, the committee identified three major objectives that schools ought to pursue. First, schools ought to promote a universal civic identity that provided a basis for social integration, solidarity, and consensus, as the committee had found that prevalent civic identities were quite weak. Second, schools needed to develop a "culture of discourse" that was tolerant of other views and encouraged students to solve conflict through negotiation. Third, schools needed to combat alienation and passivity from the State by presenting students with a realistic approach to politics. In other words, the political system ought to be presented as one that is neither idealistic nor dirty, but instead one that is complex yet effective. To achieve these objectives, the committee suggested that schools focus on three specific content areas: Israel as both a Jewish and democratic state; civil, human, and individual rights; and the principles, processes, and institutions of the democratic regime. The ultimate objective was that students should be able to internalize these civic values, critically evaluate issues based on their merits, and conduct open-minded discourse. The Kremnizer committee also addressed the status of civic education in Israel's schools and noted that in all three types of schools – secular, religious, and Arab – civics remained in a marginal position at best. In elementary schools, civics was not taught at all, though there was a brief introduction in grades 2-4 with a program called "Homeland and

Society." A civics curriculum had been prepared for the junior high schools, but its instruction was not mandatory and the decision to teach it was left to the principal of each school. It was estimated that only one third of junior high schools actually taught the subject, and consequently, most students entered high school without having been exposed to civics at all. At the high school level, civics was a mandatory subject but was only taught during the year in which students took the matriculation exam, for three hours each week. The lack of emphasis placed on civics education was evident in matriculation exam scores, as they were lower than those for all other school subjects related to the humanities and social sciences. The Kremnizer committee therefore recommended that civics be taught at all levels of schooling and be incorporated into other school subjects. However, these recommendations have not yet been implemented.[121]

Once again, while it seems as if the Ministry of Education brought to fruition a monumental reform to Israel's education system, actual changes in the classroom were scarcely evident. In his assessment of Yitzhak Navon's initiative, Ami Pedahzur recognizes its failure to achieve large-scale reform and argues that the initiative remained on the margins of Israeli education because there was, and continues to be, an overwhelming imperative to maintain the ethnic, non-liberal character of the State.[122] But he and others also suggest a number of different factors contributing to the reform's overall failure, and they are remarkably similar to those affecting implementation of the 1968 Reform as well. My suggestion here is that civics education reforms are not unlike other educational reform proposals; they too face a variety of obstacles, political and otherwise. As in the case of the 1968 Reform, external political developments – specifically the radicalization of Israeli schoolchildren and the ascension of

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[121] Ichilov, *Political Learning*, 113-115.
[122] Pedahzur, *The Israeli Response,* 117-118.

right-wing parties in the Knesset – induced the proposed reform, but systemic impediments prevented its implementation.

Recalling the theories of Ami Pedahzur, Haim Gaziel, and Miriam Ben-Peretz, it is understood that no one party or institution is responsible for the success or failure of a proposed educational initiative. Rather, outcomes are the results of their collective actions and are best understood in the context of interrelated developments. As such, a systematic breakdown of the various actors involved in the implementation of the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program reveals that civic education is no more susceptible to partisan politics than other reform proposals, and in reality is vulnerable to the same bureaucratic faults and interest group pressures that are characteristic of all educational policies.

Similar to the 1968 Reform, the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program faced a number of restrictive administrative obstacles that were due largely to the way in which it was passed. In her article "Particularistic vs. Universalistic Content in the Israeli Education System," Julia Resnik observes that the new civics program was implemented through special curricula and extra-curricular, one-time activities. Small changes were made to the mandatory civics curriculum, but it was not revised significantly.[123] One consequence of this approach was that the number of classroom hours dedicated to civic education did not change. The new program was supposed to include twice the number of classroom hours in order to accommodate both the formal curriculum and the new material; however, instruction was kept at ninety hours per year. Administrative faults were evident in the matriculation exams as well. Most subjects such as Bible studies, Hebrew, composition, and literature were each worth at least two credits on the exam, while civic studies was worth only one credit. According to Hannah Shafir, a former

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[123] Resnik, 505.

Ministry of Education official, most teachers devoted their time and energy to the instruction of the procedural aspects of democracy because that was the focus of the exam and that was all the designated classroom hours realistically permitted.[124] More substantive issues such as Jewish-Arab relations, civil rights, and the rule of law were thus omitted from many civics classes.

These administrative shortfalls were almost immediately addressed in a 1985 *Washington Post* article entitled "Israeli Teachers Learn an Explosive Subject; Once-Skirted Issue of Jewish-Arab Relations Is Met Head-On." It reported on Living Together: Israeli Arabs and Jews in Israel, one of the curricular programs associated with this larger democratic education initiative put forth by Minister Navon. According to the article, the program had been introduced on the experimental level in 11th and 12th grades in thirty Israeli high schools – a small number relative to the total of 2,300 schools nationwide. Though endorsed by the Ministry of Education, the program remained entirely voluntary, meaning that principals could decide whether or not to bring the program to their schools. The Ministry also discouraged its implementation with simultaneous budget cuts. As such, schools had to seek outside sources of funding to even introduce the program.[125] In a 1991 survey, Razel and Katz looked at principals' attitudes regarding implementation of the Living Together program. Those principals coming from secular state schools mainly pointed to the lack of time and inadequate human resources as the reasons behind their decision to opt out.[126] It is important to recall here what happened when the Ministry of Education began to cut budgets following the Reform in the 1970s. When schools received larger portions of their funds from outside sources such as parents and private

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[124] Pedahzur, "The paradox," 420-426.

[125] Walsh.

[126] Moshe Tatar, "Diversity and Citizenship Education in Israel," in *Diversity and Citizenship Education: Global Perspectives*, ed. James A. Banks (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 397.

organizations, principals and donors acquired greater influence in determining the content of their own schools' curricula. Correspondingly, the Ministry was able to exert less authority in determining what would be taught in schools, particularly in the case of extra-curricular programs such as this one.

Precisely the same situation occurred in 1995 when the Ministry of Education published an interim high school social science curriculum that included both history and civics instruction. Later analysis of the curriculum indicated that only 1.4% of teaching time was dedicated to the instruction of Arab history, and even more, Arabs were only discussed within the context of Zionism. Insufficient classroom time meant that teachers were not able to discuss current events such as the 1948 and 1956 wars. The Ministry never acknowledged these failures, but even if it had, officials did not have the power to enforce the topic's instruction.[127] Civics was not directly tested on the matriculation exams and was not mandated by formal legislation. Conversely, if the Ministry had put the democratic education program through a formal legislative process and replaced the entire civics curriculum rather than added small supplements to it, officials could have ensured the willingness of all relevant actors to participate in its instruction. Instead, the new Division for Democracy and for Coexistence was created to oversee only informal programs for teachers and students, and as a result, no fundamental changes were made. Like the 1968 Reform, implementation of these programs was left to the discretion of school principals, and more often then not, was left on the margins. The older formal curriculum with a greater focus on the Jewish-Zionist conception of the state of Israel therefore remained dominant in Israeli classrooms.

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[127] Podeh, 33-34.

The failure of the Ministry to bring this reform through the proper legislative process also left the door open for future Ministers to single-handedly undermine the entire Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program. After the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a right-wing government under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu was elected to power. Zevulun Hammer, a member of the National Religious Party was appointed Minister of Education, and in line with his party's agenda, he maintained that there was no justifiable reason to enhance democratic education if the same were not done for Jewish studies. He proceeded to establish the Board for the Education of Values (BEV), which was supposed to act as an umbrella agency for the cultivation of both Jewish and civic studies. "The practical implication of this was that these two conflicting initiatives now operated under the same organizational framework." Yitzhak Levy, also a member of the National Religious Party, was appointed Minister immediately following Hammer but decided to reverse the actions of his predecessor. He cut the human and financial resources committed to the BEV because he understood the difficulty of running two separate systems covering the same subject, where only one had a place in the formal curriculum. The financial expense of running both programs was high, and the BEV had not met its projected goals. *Ha'aretz* published an interview with Levi on April 23, 1988, and in it he expressed the belief that there was no way to force teachers and students disinterested in the activities of the Board to teach or learn subject matter that was not part of the school curriculum. Levi's successor Yossi Sarid finally decided to close both the BEV and the Division for Democracy and for Coexistence. It was broadly understood that their marginal position in relation to the mainstream school curricula was an impediment to their effectiveness,

and by forcing principals and teachers to choose from an even greater number of extra-curricular programs, Hammer inevitably weakened the position of civic education even further.[128]

The development of school autonomy was another major reason for the failure of both the 1968 Reform and the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program. The ability of schools to choose much of their own curricula, determine the allocation of their budgets, and decide which Ministry policies to support meant that principals were under no pressure to establish integrated classrooms in their schools. In fact, many principals effectively countered the Reform by establishing ability grouping in various classes. Similarly, principals could also decide whether or not to implement the programs and use the new curricular materials associated with the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program.

In his article "Diversity and Citizenship Education in Israel," Associate Professor of Education at Hebrew University Moshe Tatar defines citizenship education as "an overall school policy and structure that reinforces that school ethos regarding the degree to which an assimilationist or multicultural perspective prevails in schools." What's noteworthy in this description is not the actual content of citizenship education, but rather, the emphasis on the school as the determinant of that content. Furthermore, Tatar suggests that school principals and teachers are largely responsible for the shaping and transmission of the main messages of citizenship education. School principals have the greatest influence in forming school culture, he contends, as they serve as the role models for the parents, students, and teachers. They are familiar with the schools' demographic structure and can therefore accommodate the needs of various ethnic groups in terms of both pedagogy and culture.[129]

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[128] Pedahzur, 423-424.
[129] Tatar, 388.

One way in which principals can exert their influence is through the choice of school textbooks. Even prior to the formal democratic education program launched in 1985, Minister of Education Zevulun Hammer introduced two new textbooks on Arab-Israeli relations. In 1981, he published *We and Our Neighbors*, which was geared toward elementary and junior high schools. Its aim was to encourage teachers to discuss ideas of peace and peacemaking in the classroom. The Curriculum Planning Department of the Ministry and the Van Leer Foundation then jointly published *Living Together*, which was created specifically for high school students with an explicit focus on education for democracy and Jewish-Arab coexistence. The experimental version of *Living Together* was tested in the 1982/1983 school year in a few schools, followed by publication of the interim edition in 1984. As part of Navon's Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program, the textbook was recommended as an optional topic within the civics curriculum. Later in the 1992/1993 school year, the topic "Arab Citizens of Israel" was formally introduced into the civics curriculum, however, both the subject and the textbook remained optional.[130] As such, the Ministry could publish any number of textbooks on democratic education but still could not force school principals to implement coexistence programs or use these particular books in their classes. For any number of reasons, principals could deem the new civics textbooks unsuitable for their own schools, whether they personally did not agree with the tenets of the books or felt as if the parents and students at their schools would object to their content.

In a *Ha'aretz* article dated November 1984, Nili Mandel writes about another textbook published in 1981 with a very different approach to the Arab population in Israel. *Central Issues in the History of the People and the State in Recent Generations* was one of the most popular

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[130] Podeh, 47-48.

textbooks amongst 12th graders and their teachers in both secular and religious state schools, despite its inclusion of a number of false assertions. It states, "There is no such thing as a Palestinian people, its doesn't exist – but if our Jews help it to come into being, then it will exist." It also claims that "the Dome of the Rock is not sacred to Arabs; they invited the tale of Mohammed's ascent to heaven in order to twist history." Though the book was not included on the Ministry's list of civics textbooks, it was listed in the teachers' bibliography provided in a 1983/1984 circular from the Director General.[131] Mandel's article provides a clear example of how principals can determine the shape of citizenship education in their schools directly through their choice of textbooks. At the time the article was written, the Ministry had published two new textbooks with the purpose of inculcating a more democratic and tolerant approach to the Israeli Arab population. Yet, it is clear that the majority of principals preferred to use the textbook with more traditional Israeli ideologies, despite the Ministry's ostensive suggestion to use the newer texts.

Exploitation of school autonomy was particularly salient amongst Israel's religious state schools. Principals often acted according to the belief that because their schools were part of the religious sector, the Ministry's curricular reforms were not necessarily applicable to them. One of the major components of the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program was encounter between Jewish and Arab schoolchildren. Yet Elie Podeh reports that few schools took part in the encounter programs, and only 2-3% of all teachers participated in the seminars designed to prepare them for facilitation of these encounters. Religious schools specifically resisted the encounters in fear that their students would be encouraged to assimilate.[132] In the

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[131] Nili Mandler, "Israeli Textbook Denies Existence of Palestinians," *Ha'aretz* (November 18, 1984).
[132] Podeh, 56.

aforementioned survey conducted by Razel and Katz in 1991, principals often cited religious

dilemmas found within programs such as the encounters, as well as the opposition of teachers

involved.[133] And in a 1985 *Al-Hamishmar* article entitled "Living Together?", David Eden writes

about the religious sector's defiance of the Living Together program. Yaakov Adani, director of

the Religious Education Department in the Ministry of Education, sent a directive to all religious

state schools ordering them to halt all scheduled meetings between Jewish and Arab youth.

Because his position is autonomous within the Ministry, he had the ability to directly counter

Ministry policies, and even more, school principals were free to follow his instructions and select

programming as they wished. Eventually, Adani was able to reach a compromise with Minister

Navon, and they agreed that meetings would take place but in a controlled setting. Conditions

included the banning of food to ensure that students would not consume non-Kosher foods as

well as the restriction of meetings to same-sex only.[134] The independent status of the religious

sector thus gave schools a tremendous amount of bargaining power in the implementation of

Ministry programs. They were not willing to participate in the exchange aspect of the Living

Together program and as a result were able to negotiate and make adjustments to the program

according to their demands. Even with these changes, however, many still declined participation.

Referring back to Moshe Tatar's article on citizenship education, teachers also play a

significant role in the formation of a school's civic culture. They determine exactly what

information is given to students and how it is transmitted. This is similar to the previous

argument put forth by Amos Dreyfus and Yossef Mazouz, who draw a connection between

teachers' perceptions of curricula and their performance in the classroom. More specifically,

Dreyfus and Mazouz claim that teachers' opinions and beliefs directly affect their classroom

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[133] Tatar, 397.

[134] David Eden, "Living Together?," *Al-Hamishmar*, August/September 1985, p. 3.

instruction. In the case of the 1968 Reform, schools' resistance could be partially explained by teachers' opposition to the policy. Teachers were not involved in the political process that introduced the proposal, and the teachers' unions worked adamantly against its passage. The European Council for Cultural Cooperation published research in support of this claim, affirming that many educational reforms have not been successful because teachers were not involved in their planning from the start and thus may not have been convinced that the reforms were merited. Another explanation for teachers' resistance is that they were ill equipped to instruct large groups of heterogeneous students.[135] In either case, teachers played at least a partial role in the failure to implement the 1968 Reform.

Teachers played an equally large, if not greater, role in the failure to implement the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program. The new curricula incorporated controversial issues that teachers were often unwilling to discuss in the classroom because they are highly polarizing and emotive – Territories, settlements, and permanent borders to name a few. For many teachers, the inherent conflict between the democratic nature of the State and many of Israel's policies posed a problem. They found it difficult to defend anti-democratic tendencies such as the desirability for a state based upon Jewish law and the proposed transfer of Arab citizens outside of state boundaries. The status of the Arab minority in Israel was also an extremely sensitive political topic. Some teachers were also afraid of being labeled as partisan because many Orthodox and extremist right-wing supporters believe that democracy is itself a left-wing ideal.[136] At the time the new coexistence program was introduced, teachers had been accustomed to teaching the rudiments of civics education and preferred to stick to material with which they were comfortable. In addition, Orit Ichilov notes that in interviews, teachers

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[135] Iram and Schmida, 139.
[136] Neuberger, 300-301.

identified the external environment as one of the primary obstacles to accomplishing the goals of the new civics education agenda.[137] In other words, outside events reinforced students' negative attitudes towards the Arab population, and it was difficult to counter that force in the classroom.

Yitzhak Komem, a former high school history and civics teacher from Jerusalem, published a detailed essay in 2001 describing the difficulties of teaching the Arab-Israeli Conflict. One of the toughest issues in teaching the Conflict, he says, is that over-simplified messages are more easily absorbed than the more complex ones, even though the latter might be more truthful. "It is easier to generalize about 'Arab aggression' than to enter into the real complexities of Arab-Jewish relations over a century of conflict." Moreover, most students bring to the classroom opinions constructed in their home environments. The mass media, including television, radio, and the printed press; family; friends; politicians; and the Internet provide false knowledge about the Conflict and the Arab people. Komem goes on to cite some of the more prominent "facts." For example, it is commonly believed that the Palestinian population left its land and its country in 1948 at the request of the invading Arab armies. Many also believe that the Israelis always offered the Arabs peace but that their giving hand was constantly rejected. Real events such as wars or acts of terror also shape the climate of opinion, and according to Komem, stereotypes and demonization constitute a serious obstacle to realistic analysis of the Conflict.[138]

In 1985, American journalist Danny Rubinstein also published a telling article in the *New York Times* about the complexity of teaching democracy in Israel. In it he comments on the rising popularity of Rabbi Kahane amongst Israeli youth and the State's subsequent mobilization

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[137] Tatar, 396.
[138] Yitzhak Komem, "Teaching the Israeli-Arab Conflict: Notes from the Classroom," *Palestine-Israel Journal* 8, No. 2 (2001): 34-37.

against his influence with various programs to teach democracy in the education system, private research institutes, public foundations, the Israeli Defense Forces, and the Jewish Agency for Israel. The irony of these programs, however, is that daily life in Israel countered democratic principles. Rubinstein reminds readers that 1.5 million Arabs had been living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and that Arab laborers in the Territories did not receive the same benefits as their Israeli counterparts. Additionally, Israeli Arabs received only a part of the child allowances that Jewish Israelis received, while Arabs living in the Territories received none at all.[139] These few examples demonstrate the complications teachers faced in trying to teach students the principles of democracy in a complicated political context. The Arab-Israeli Conflict provided a tricky educational setting in that students were much more receptive to simple and inaccurate facts and stereotypes, while the political status quo in Israel often countered the very democratic principles the Ministry of Education was attempting to convey.

Teachers' hesitation to teach civics was likely worsened by the fact that the Ministry did not provide teachers with adequate training. Training for civic studies was merged with the training for general history studies, and as a result, teachers were ill-equipped to confront complex issues of contemporary politics (i.e. recent wars with Arab countries) in the classroom. Doron Schochat, former head of the Division for Democracy and for Coexistence, indicated in an interview that civics was not considered a discipline requiring any special training. Instead, a single teacher was responsible for teaching both the Jewish history of the State of the Israel as well as civics, which were supposed to promote the contending values of religious exclusionism and universalism. Surveys given to civic studies teachers show that they preferred to teach

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[139] Danny Rubinstein, "The Irony of Israel's Democracy Project," *New York Times* (July 16, 1985), 23.

national values to universal ones.[140] This information, combined with the anecdotes provided by Yitzhak Komem and Danny Rubinstein cited above, provides ample evidence that teachers were not prepared to teach the new civics curricula. Had the Ministry provided teachers with appropriate training, they would have been more comfortable discussing newer, more controversial issues in the classroom and therefore would have been more willing to discuss the content of the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program. As in the case of the 1968 Reform, the Ministry failed to involve teachers in the decision-making and planning processes of the reform initiative and consequently faced obstacles to implementation.

Though almost twenty years had passed since the introduction of the 1968 Reform, it appears that the Ministry of Education had not learned from its mistakes. Its heedless initiation of the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program demonstrates the Ministry's hardened belief that centralized policymaking ensures smooth implementation of reforms down to the school level. Officials have failed to understand that various actors and groups – in this case budget makers, future education ministers, school principals, and teachers – can and would influence the way in which schools approached the new civic education program. It's plausible that overarching political support for these and other proposals created a sense of complacency amongst policymakers, but this should not have discouraged them from taking a more meticulous approach to education reform.

V. CASE STUDY: Public Committee on Arab Education (2008)

It comes as no surprise, then, that well into the 21st century, Israel still has not made significant progress on reforming the civics education program. In April of 2008, Yossi Yonah, former co-Director of the Forum on Israeli Culture and Society at the Van Leer Institute in

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[140] Pedahzur, "The paradox," 420.

Jerusalem and lecturer in the Department of Education at Ben Gurion University of the Negev, published an article entitled "The Palestinian Minority in Israel: when common core curriculum in education meets conflicting national narratives." In it he discusses the status of Palestinians in the Israeli educational narrative and various attempts to change it. Traditionally, he writes, Israel has adopted a "two-layered" position toward the cultural heritage of the Palestinian minority. The State has acknowledged Palestinian heritage and accepted Arabic as their official language by allowing them to use it as the language of instruction in their schools and by providing room for classes in Arabic literature. Yet simultaneously, Israel refuses to include the Palestinian national narrative in the curricula of either the Arab or Jewish pupils. In the year 2000, the Knesset even amended the 1953 State Education Act, changing some of its basic aims. It now states that one of the primary goals of public education is to provide students with the option of "getting to know the language, culture, history, heritage, and the unique tradition of the Arab population and to other population groups within the State of Israel and to acknowledge the equal rights of all citizens of Israel." Though the amendment recognizes the cultural uniqueness of the Arab population, it still does not recognize the group as a national minority with its own unique narrative and fails to produce tangible change in school curricula.[141]

According to Daniel Bar-Tal from the School of Education at Tel-Aviv University, Israeli society continued to advocate in favor of continuation of the Conflict, particularly after the failure of the Oslo Accords and the beginning of the Second Intifada in 2000. Thus, attempts to introduce Palestinian national themes into civics studies not only invited criticism from officials within the Ministry itself, but also continued to evoke serious opposition from the

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[141] Yossi Yonah, "The Palestinian Minority in Israel: when common core curriculum in education meets conflicting national narratives," *Intercultural Education* 19, no. 2 (April 2008): 106-107.

general Jewish public, including politicians, columnists, intellectuals, and others. Many Israelis believed that as long as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues, the two narratives should not meet.[142] A study from the University of Haifa confirms that this outlook has prevailed within Israeli society. Published in *Ha'aretz* on May 1, 2009, it shows that three out of four Jewish students in Israel view Arabs as ignorant, uncivilized, and dirty. Other studies show that Jewish youth are increasingly ready to deny Arab citizens their democratic rights.[143]

As her predecessors had done in response to alarming data regarding the attitudes of Israeli schoolchildren, Minister of Education Yuli Tamir took action in favor of education reform. She appointed a public committee to define state policy in the field of education for a "shared life" between Arab and Jewish citizens in Israel. Headed by Gavriel Salomon, professor of Education at the University of Haifa and winner of the Israel Prize in Education, and Dr. Mohammed Issawi, president of the Al Qassemi College of Education in Baka al-Gerbiyeh, the committee focused on two primary objectives: the establishment of a democratic foundation of equal rights and opportunities as well as the promotion of the common values of equality, liberty, equity, individual rights, and collective identity through mutual respect and acceptance. The committee's ten recommendations included policies that would be overseen by the Ministry of Education and would gradually incorporate Arab heritage into the national curriculum. Civics studies promoting a "shared life" would be mandatory in all schools and would be taught continuously from kindergarten through the twelfth grade. In addition, Jewish students would study Arabic and learn about the history and culture of their Arab neighbors, while teachers would undergo extensive training to encourage students to accept and internalize these principles

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[142] Ibid, 114.
[143] Yousef Jabareen, "A welcome initiative, quashed," *Ha'aretz*, May 1, 2009, http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1082172.html.

of a "shared life." The program would also include personal encounters between Jewish and Arab students. The Ministry of Education subsequently accepted all recommendations with a suggested annual budget of 10 million NIS (New Israeli *shekels*), appointment of national and religious officers to oversee their implementation, and a coordinated national kick-off campaign. Commenting on the proposal, Yousef Jabareen wrote in *Ha'aretz*, "Until now, Israel has had no system-wide and mandatory program for educating toward building a shared life – that is, toward mutual recognition, partnership, social justice, and peaceful relations between Jewish citizens and Arab-Palestinian ones."[144]

Not even one year has passed since the establishment of the Public Committee on Arab Education, yet the Ministry has spurned its recommendations. Upon close scrutiny, it becomes clear that this reform initiative, like those that preceded it in 1968 and 1985, suffered the inevitable fate of education reform in Israel; failure to legislate left the initiative vulnerable to the whims and actions of other relevant actors. Mere acceptance of the recommendations by the Ministry of Education at the time of the proposal did not guarantee the participation of all actors, both at that time and in the future.

This was immediately evident at the conclusion of Yuli Tamir's term in office, when incoming Minister of Education Gideon Sa'ar (Likud) asked her not to appoint the team charged with helping to implement the committee's ten recommendations. A Ministry official explained to the *Jerusalem Post* that Sa'ar wanted time to read the report, study it, question the professionals in the office, and then decide how to approach the issue, but Tamir responded with hesitations about his move. "I suspect that behind this demand, there is a more profound decision not to continue with these kinds of projects. I think there is a decision not to deal with issues

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[144] Jabareen, "A welcome initiative, quashed."

related to coexistence between Jews and Arabs."[145] Evidence suggests that Tamir may have been

right. In another article, Yousef Jabareen reports that Sa'ar has instead pushed for a new "Jewish

heritage and culture" program for grades 4-9 that he hopes to implement in public schools

beginning in the 2010/2011 school year. As part of the program, Jewish and Arab students alike

would learn about the Jewish calendar, the centrality of Jerusalem to Jewish history, and the

significance of the flag and national anthem. Both groups of students would also be encouraged

to enlist in the Israeli Defense Forces.[146]

Sa'ar has thus marginalized the new "shared life" program and brought to the forefront

of the Education Ministry a program that instead further emphasizes Israel's Jewish heritage. He

is later quoted in *The Jerusalem Post* citing two main obstacles preventing a change in the

relationship between the State of Israel and the Arab minority: the Arab-Israeli Conflict, which

heavily influences the relationship, and the strong currents in both the Jewish and Arab

populations that support segregation of the Arab sector.[147] Regardless of the reasoning behind his

decision to halt the "shared life" program, what's significant is the ease with which he was able

to do so. Because Sa'ar was not bound by legislation to carry out the initiative, he simply left it

on the margins, where it will remain until another minister decides to reintroduce it. This

situation is remarkably similar to that of Yitzhak Navon and the Education for Jewish-Arab

Coexistence Program. Navon also did not go through formal legislative procedures, and as a

result, when Zevulun Hammer came into office, he introduced the Board for the Education of

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[145] Brenda Gazzar, "Sa'ar delays student coexistence plan," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 1, 2010, http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=140361.
[146] Yousef Jabareen, "Old problems, new challenges," *The Jerusalem Post*, September 3, 2009, p. 15.
[147] Ron Friedman, "Sa'ar: Arab citizens' search for equality stymied by conflict with Palestinians. 'Both sides must instill in the next generation a message of coexistence.' Minister encourages National Service for Arabs," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 24, 2010, p. 5.

Values and effectively replaced civic studies with increased Jewish studies. But the failure to legislate is not restricted to civics education reforms; the 1968 Reform was also not implemented in many schools because principals were not mandated to do so.

The institutionalization of school autonomy also continued to have an effect on the types of programming found in Israeli schools, including the recommendations put forth by the Public Committee on Arab Education. As recently as last year, scholars continued to address the dynamic relationship between schools and curricula. In an article published in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* in February 2009, Nura Resh and Aaron Benavot contend that local schools "play an important mediating role between the official curriculum and actual classroom implementation." More specifically, there are two organizational features of the education system that affect curricular diversity: institutional differentiation and school choice. Institutional differentiation refers to various pedagogical or vocational tracks found within the school system; the higher the differentiation within the school system, the higher the between-school variation in curricular implementation. The authors also argue that the more schools compete for students, resources, and community recognition under a system of school choice, the greater the diversification of curricular subjects employed by schools. In the Israeli school system, there has been growing pressure to decentralize the administration of public education and provide greater autonomy to local authorities and schools. This was evident beginning in the 1980's with the development of gray education and is regularly apparent in Ministry policies. In 1996, the Ministry issued new directives for junior high and high schools giving principals more flexibility and authority, and in 1997, several "non-directives" were issued for the elementary schools as well.

Given this history, it can be assumed that curricular implementation in Israel is extremely variable. This has significant implications for civics education because highly institutionalized subjects such as language and mathematics will be taught with greater uniformity as compared to more peripheral subjects such as art, geography, and civics. School-based decision-making regarding which subjects to teach are influenced by various societal and school-related factors – composition of the student body and its needs, principals' ideology, amount of school resources, availability of professional staff, and community and parental pressures. And in the religious sector, Jewish studies receive a high degree of emphasis at the expense of peripheral subjects.[148] A report compiled by the Adva Center in Israel entitled "Segregation, Inequality, and Weakened Leadership" highlights the various curricula taught in each school system, with the big city schools and religious schools functioning as largely independent. The financial donors of these institutions essentially determine their curricula, and the situation is worsened by the fact that "the Education Ministry is incapable of regulating the amount of money being raised by schools to pay for extra-curricular activities."[149] According to the report, there is essentially no uniform national curriculum. One could thus conclude that even if the Ministry, under the leadership of Gideon Sa'ar, continued with the implementation of Yuli Tamir's "shared life" program, State officials would have little influence over its introduction into individual schools.

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[148] Nura Resh and Aaron Benavot, "Educational governance, school autonomy, and curriculum implementation: diversity and uniformity in knowledge offerings to Israeli pupils," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 1 (February 2009), http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:2207/openurl?genre=article&issn=0022%2d0272&volume=41&issue=1&spage=67.

[149] Ben Hartman, "Report: Israeli schools divided by race, religion, and class," *The Jerusalem Post,* December 17, 2009, p. 7.

As in the case of both the 1968 Reform and the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program, many principals did not carry out the initiatives due to their own ideological opposition or their concern for parents' and teachers' objections; this remains in practice today. Though not an official program of the Ministry of Education, the "Language as a Cultural Bridge" Program at the Abraham Fund Initiatives seeks to institute mandatory spoken Arabic and Arab culture studies in all Jewish elementary public schools. Its explicit goals include reducing stereotypes, strengthening commitment to tolerance and diversity, and generating inter-group understanding.[150] In an interview conducted in July of 2009, program manager Dadi Komem described the importance of local municipalities to the program's implementation. The Abraham Fund works solely with municipalities, he explained, as superintendents decide whether or not to bring the program to their schools. He also noted that some superintendents and principals resist implementation of programs like this for any number of reasons, including parental opposition or simply the lack of adequate school hours.[151] In all likelihood, they would take a similarly cautious approach to the "shared life" program, for it shares the basic tenets of "Language as a Cultural Bridge," and the Ministry again would not be able to guarantee the new program's implementation in all schools.

In the religious sector, recent legislation has loosened the Ministry of Education's control over curricular content even further. According to a 2008 law, ultra-Orthodox schools are now eligible to receive public funds without the requirement to implement the Ministry's core curriculum, so long as the schools do not contradict Israel's values as a Jewish and democratic state. *Agudat* schools are not subject to inspection on matters that are not technical, and they will

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[150] "Strategy & Initiatives: Language as a Cultural Bridge," The Abraham Fund Initiatives, http://www.abrahamfund.org/main/siteNew/?page=42&stId=882&langId=1.
[151] Dadi Komem, interview by author, transcription, July 14, 2009.

continue to receive up to 60% of the regular funds given to those schools loyal to the Ministry's

curriculum. Previously, the law stated that educational institutions would be funded according to

the amount of material adopted from the basic studies curriculum, and in theory, this would have

withheld a significant amount of funding from the ultra-Orthodox schools. However, the law was

rarely enforced, and many Haredi schools continued to receive State funds despite never teaching

core subjects such as English, math, and civics.[152] Now that the practice has been legalized and

institutionalized, the ultra-Orthodox have even less incentive to introduce a program such as that

proposed by the Public Committee on Arab Education. They not only place a high emphasis on

Judaic and Talmudic studies and will focus majority of their teaching hours on these areas, but

they also tend to oppose the democratic and universalistic principles underlying the "shared life"

program.

In addition to local superintendents and school principals, teachers would also have had

considerable influence on the implementation of the program in the classroom had it been carried

out by the Ministry. Asher Shkedi, head of the Department of Teacher Education in the School of

Education at Hebrew University, published an article discussing the transformation of school

curricula from initial development to actual use in the classroom. In it he highlights the role of

teachers' "personal curriculum narrative" which "imposes meaning on the vast array of ideas and

facts contained within subject matter, saturates subject matter with pedagogical interpretations,

[and] connects it to school environment, classroom events, and interconnects lessons over time."

The result is that teachers' own conceptions often clash with those of the official curriculum, and

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[152] Neta Sela, "Yeshivas to receive State funds without teaching basic subjects," *Y Net News*,
July 24, 2008, http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3572383,00.html.

teachers' responses will often be to transform the curriculum into one they find more suitable.[153] Thus, if a teacher disagrees the basic tenets of the "shared life" program, he or she is inclined to arbitrarily alter the curriculum or simply exclude some of its content. The same holds true if he or she thinks the parents or students will react negatively to the content.

Shkedi conducted a multiple case study of twenty-six Bible Studies teachers in Israeli public schools in the 2002/2003 school year. All of the teachers used the formal, prepared curriculum in their work and relied on it for various reasons. For some teachers, the formal curriculum helped them understand what to emphasize, what to teach less extensively, and what to ignore. Many teachers stressed the importance of the teaching goals because they provided a sense of direction and highlighted the essential points of the lesson. But despite these positive attitudes towards the curriculum frame, no teacher perceived it as compulsory. They all viewed it as a suggestion for teaching rather than an exact set of guidelines. As a result, only 20% of teachers devised and assigned tasks that were consistent with the formal curriculum. Approximately 30% of teachers devised and assigned tasks that were not derived from the formal curriculum but were believed to be consistent with its goals. Most shockingly, however, 45% of teachers created tasks not found within the formal curriculum, nor were they believed to be consistent with the curriculum writers' intentions. In these cases, teachers often created their curricular assignments in response to the "interest, questions, and views of students," leaving them susceptible to the teachers' influences and ideas. Lastly, 5% of teachers assigned tasks that directly clashed with the formal curriculum. This study revealed the major difference between the curriculum authors and the teachers – teachers perceived the curriculum in terms of their

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[153] Asher Shkedi, "From curriculum guide to classroom practice: teachers' narratives of curriculum application," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 41, no. 6 (2009): 837.

students and their own willingness to cater to their students' needs and interests, while the authors perceived it strictly in terms of content and goals.[154]

Recalling the Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program, teachers faced extraordinary obstacles in the classroom. They not only found it difficult to discuss emotive and controversial issues in the classroom, but also struggled with the idea of teaching democracy while simultaneously defending many of Israel's anti-democratic tendencies. Some merely wanted to avoid partisan labels. All of these concerns are bound to resurface if the "shared life" program is revived; these two initiatives share the same basic principles and goals. But most significantly, these two programs confront the same systemic challenges and obstacles; evidence has shown that the Israeli education system has failed to evolve in such a way that allows for smooth education reform. Until the basic structure and standard operating procedures are amended in favor of strengthened and more centralized control mechanisms, the Ministry of Education will find it increasingly difficult to implement any type of reform initiative.

Conclusion

Since *hamachapach*, or the political revolution of 1977, partisanship and ideological division have largely characterized parliamentary politics. The year ushered in the split between "Israelis" and "Jews", as Uri Ram suggests, or "Post-Zionists" and "Neo-Zionists", which led to enormous disagreement on major issues such as the resolution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict, settlements in the West Bank, the status of Jerusalem, and the position of the Arab minority in Israeli society. But the lesson learned from all three of these case studies is that critics of the education reform process, and policymaking in general, have focused their energies in the wrong direction. The main obstacles to reform lie not with the passage or failure of reform policies in

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[154] Shkedi, 843-850.

the Knesset, but rather, with the implementation of those policies. Party politics have stood little in the way of the authorization of education reforms, and more importantly, the Ministry of Education itself does not have sufficient authority to ensure that new reforms are carried out with success. This is symptomatic of a larger flaw within the Israeli system of government in that governmental agencies are conspicuously detached from the executive and legislative bodies. Thus, the political dynamics of the Knesset have little, if any, connection to policy execution.

The recent case of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Interior Ministry regarding Jewish housing in east Jerusalem is a prime example. On his latest diplomatic trip to Israel, American Vice President Joe Biden was stunned to learn that the Israeli government had approved 1,600 new housing units for Jewish citizens in east Jerusalem, just as the United States was to begin indirect negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians and demanded that Israelis freeze construction in the area. Netanyahu claims that he was completely blindsided by the plan's approval, which was carried out by Interior Minister Eli Yishai of the the Shas Party, and that the timing was unfortunate.[155] Though Netanyahu today supports Yishai's actions, this minor example demonstrates the power of cabinet ministers even beyond the scope of education. Policies are often proposed and implemented within the confines of individual ministries, and thus the Prime Minister and the Knesset he or she oversees often have little role in the policymaking process. Either the Knesset passes legislation, leaving implementation to the relevant ministries, or the Knesset is not involved in the process at all.

This paper analyzes three case studies of education reform in Israel, all of which underscore the systemic difficulties found within in the reform process. The first case – the 1968 Reform under Minister Zalman Aranne – provides an important paradigm for several reasons.

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[155] Hillary Leila Krieger, "Analysis: Construction freeze fiasco a test for J'lem, US," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 3, 2010, http://www.jpost.com/Home/Article.aspx?id=170802.

First, the reform itself was completely irrelevant to the subject of civics education, demonstrating that the factors discussed are universally applicable within the context of education policy. Second, the Reform received widespread support both across the political spectrum and within broader Israeli society, yet still encountered numerous obstacles in the implementation process. Lastly, this case lays the foundation for analysis of later reform initiatives, highlighting the various factors that played a role in its failure, including the lack of binding legislation, budgetary constraints, school decentralization, parents, principals, and teachers. The latter two cases – the 1985 Education for Jewish-Arab Coexistence Program and the 2008 Public Committee for Arab Education – address civics education, which is the primary focus of this paper. Using the concepts and factors identified in the first case, I have concluded that civics education reforms are not unique in that their highly political nature inherently prevents their success. Rather, they are subject to the same systemic obstacles that other, unrelated reforms encounter, and future policymakers ought to take these into consideration before proposing yet another civics education reform that is bound to fail.

For better or worse, this paper also brings to light the inherent paradox surrounding the relationship between national education and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Research suggests that reforming civics education in Israel would be instrumental in changing the attitudes and beliefs of Israeli schoolchildren; the school system has historically emphasized the need to create national solidarity and inculcate Zionist values rather than highlight the country's democratic and universal principles. Such changes would, in turn, socialize the populace so that it would be more inclined to facilitate a workable peace agreement. Policymakers would be more willing to negotiate with the Palestinians on the terms of a sustainable political accord, but also, the general public would be drastically more disposed to coexistence with their Arab neighbors under

whatever those terms may be. Like those proposed in 1985 and 2008, reform of the civics curriculum, if implemented, could invite wide-reaching attitudinal changes that mend the inequities addressed by both Orit Ichilov and Ami Pedahzur in their respective discussions of societal attitudes in Israel. Yet on the other hand, existing attitudes also constitute a great barrier to reform. The aforementioned case studies demonstrate how the decentralization of the school system has allowed the public to play an increasingly large role in public education. The personal beliefs of education ministers, principals, and even parents are decisive factors in determining curricular content. In fact, their fundamental disbelief in the peace process and concurrent emphasis on Jewish education has consistently prevented the implementation of reforms introduced at the national level. Herein lies the paradox. Reform is necessary for change in societal attitudes, but societal attitudes simultaneously preclude the success of reform.

Education is still the primary tool for national socialization, and consequently officials must consider it an essential part of the solution to the Arab-Israeli Conflict. Maintaining the status quo will ensure that Israelis are equally, if not even more, opposed to conferring rights on the Arab population and eliminating long-standing prejudices. Thus, in their quest towards reconciliation with the Palestinians and the greater Arab world, Israeli policymakers could start by removing the various obstacles in the path to education reform. This would be a small but significant step towards creating a peaceful coexistence between Israelis and Palestinians.

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Van Leer Institute – Jerusalem, Israel
Researcher: Mina Zemach (1984)

21%	Supported more censorship of the media
24%	Were for curtailing freedom to criticize the government
27%	Declared it legitimate to limit Israel's democracy in order to prevent opponents of the government expressing their views in public
44%	Supported legislation prohibiting criticism of the government's policy on Jewish-Arab relations
12%	Supported the restriction of courts' independence
52%	Were in favour of limiting the right to strike
19%	We for curtailing the rights of trade unions
47%	Advocated limiting the rights of Israeli Arabs
23%	Supported more religious laws; even if that implies less democracy
36%	Opposed freedom of expression in the media for religious extremists, who are in favour of a law prohibiting all transportation (public and private) on the Sabbath
16%	Supported curtailing democracy in order to grant more privileges to specific communities
37%	Declared their support for limiting the rights of Christians
42%	Were for limiting the rights of all non-Jews
47%	Agreed that all Muslims and Christians should not be allowed to fill high-level positions in the civil service
60%	Denied Israeli Arabs' right to full equality
64%	Opposed granting Arabs from the Occupied Territories the right to vote (should the territories be annexed)
46%	Advocated freedom of association for groups that support violence against Israeli Arabs (part of this group was in favour of *more* freedom of association for such groups)
38%	Were in favor of the activities of private organizations whose aim it is to take revenge against Arabs who attacked Jews
43%	Wished to deny freedom of expression to Jews supporting the idea of a Palestinian state
66%	Denied freedom of expression to Arabs supporting a Palestinian state