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PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION IN ISRAEL ORGANIZATIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES

A report submitted to the Bernard van Leer Foundation

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סדרת ניירות מדיניות

החינוך הקדם-יסודי בישראל היבטים ארגוניים ודמוגרפיים

איל קמחי, עורך

בהשתתפות:
נחום בלס
חיים בלייך
הילה צבן

נייר מדיניות מס' 2012.01

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איל קמחי הוא סגן מנהל מרכז טאוב לחקר המדיניות החברתית בישראל ופרופסור במחלקה לכלכלה חקלאית ומינהל, האוניברסיטה העברית. נחום בלס הוא חוקר בכיר בחינוך במרכז. חיים בלייך הוא חוקר במרכז. הילה צבן היא דוקטורנטית במחלקה לסוציולוגיה ואנתרופולוגיה באוניברסיטת בן-גוריון. כל הטעויות הן של המחברים. הדעות המובאות להלן הן של המחברים ואינן בהכרח משקפות את דעות מרכז טאוב לחקר המדיניות החברתית בישראל.

מותר לצטט קטעי טקסט קצרים – שאינם עולים על שתי פסקאות – ללא הסכמה מפורשת, ובלבד שיינתן אזכור מלא למקור הציטוט.

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Pre-Primary Education in Israel: A Baseline Study

Preface

Public opinion in Israel generally expresses dissatisfaction with the country's education system. In recent years, the achievements of Israeli pupils have been below those of 25 comparable Western countries.¹ Scholastic achievement is strongly correlated with socioeconomic status among other things,² and given the fact that poverty rates among Israeli children are on the rise and have reached well over a third of the country's children in recent years,³ the future looks quite challenging.

It is commonly accepted that an important basis for school achievements and later lifetime success is early childhood education. In the words of Nobel Laureate James J. Heckman, "...early childhood programs pay dividends for life."⁴ The objective of this baseline study is to describe the pre-primary education system in Israel and lay the foundation for further research and policy formation in this important field.

Both qualitative and quantitative sections are included here. We provide qualitative information based on a literature review and on interviews with various representatives of different authorities and organizations involved in early childhood education. In addition, quantitative data analyses are provided that are based on detailed pupil-level and preschool-level data from the Ministry of Education. These two types of analyses complement each other.

Many socioeconomic indicators as well as school achievement test results indicate considerable gaps between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority in Israel. It is conceivable that the roots of these gaps lie in differential access to and quality of early childhood education in the two sectors. We will therefore highlight Jewish-Arab differences throughout the document.

Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the development of pre-primary education in Israel. It highlights the legal framework and organizational structure. Compulsory education for children in the 3-4 year-old age groups was legislated in 1984, but it has been implemented only partially and on a selective basis since 1999.⁵ Public preschools are operated by municipalities, but there are also private preschools offering improved services for higher fees. Registration and supervision of private

¹ Dan Ben-David, "Israel's Education System – An International Perspective and Recommendations for Reform." In Dan Ben-David, Editor, *State of the Nation Report: Society, Economy and Policy in Israel 2009*. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, September 2010, pp. 115-156.

² Ina V.S. Mullis, Michael O. Martin, Ann M. Kennedy and Pierre Foy, PIRLS 2006 International Report. Boston: TIMMS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2007.

³ National Insurance Institute, Poverty and Social Gaps 2009, Annual Report. Jerusalem, November 2010 (in Hebrew).

⁴ James J. Heckman, Reduce Deficits and Strengthen the Economy: Invest in Early Childhood Development. Lecture at McCormick Forum, Chicago, December 16, 2010. See also <http://www.heckmanequation.org/content/resource/why-early-investment-matters>.

⁵ Priority has been given to localities with lower socioeconomic rankings.

preschools are handled by the Ministry of Education, but in practice the Ministry fulfills these roles quite rarely and unsatisfactorily.

Chapter 2 describes the various elements in the pre-primary education systems and their roles. The focus is on the 3-6 year-old age groups. Preschools are administered jointly by the Ministry of Education and the municipal authorities, but the Ministry alone is responsible for preparing the curriculum and supervising the preschools. Funding of public preschools is shared by the Ministry, the municipalities and parents, according to rules that take into account the age of the pupils, the socioeconomic status of the municipality, and the economic situation of parents. Some of the kindergartens for 5-year-olds enjoy extra funding for longer school days. Municipalities, NGOs and commercial providers offer extended afternoon programs for a fee. In Arab municipalities and in Jewish ultra-Orthodox communities there exist "unofficial recognized preschools" that are operated by private organizations. These preschools are licensed and supervised by the Ministry of Education, but the supervision is limited and far from satisfactory.

Chapter 3 provides a demographic picture of preschool children (3-6-year-olds) for the years 2000-2010. Enrollment rates remained relatively stable throughout the decade in Jewish communities, and increased substantially in Arab communities, mostly due to the gradual implementation of the Compulsory Education Law for the 3-4-year-old age group. Despite this increase, enrollment rates are still lower in the Arab population. Changes in enrollment in each sector also vary by sub-sectors, and also have geographic and socioeconomic dimensions. Between 2005 and 2010 there was a 20 percent increase in the number of 6-year-old children remaining in kindergarten for another year. This creates an extra burden on the system in terms of funding, teachers and infrastructure. It is a phenomenon most prevalent within the Jewish population. Enrollment in private kindergartens more than doubled between 2000 in 2009, most of it in the Jewish population.

Chapter 4 describes the training of preschool teachers. Training of teachers takes place in both academic and non-academic institutions, and is funded by the Ministry of Education, which also determines the admission criteria. These criteria have been rather low, but have increased somewhat in recent years. There is also a special training program for academics who decide to work in early childhood education. In 2006, a government commission recommended some structural changes in the curriculum of early childhood education programs, and these recommendations have now been implemented by most training institutions. Students specializing in early childhood education are almost entirely females, and the share of Arabs and ultra-Orthodox Jews among them is relatively high, implying a possible future shortage of teachers in the State-operated non-religious Jewish preschools.⁶

Chapter 5 presents some demographic characteristics of preschool teachers. Jewish teachers are relatively experienced. The relatively small fraction of less experienced teachers indicates that the profession attracted fewer new teachers in recent years, and this raises some concern for future years, after the experienced generation of teachers retires. A similar process seems to be in motion, although with some lag, with respect

⁶ Anecdotally, a recent report in the daily newspaper *Ma'ariv* (August 23rd, 2011, page 18) indicates that the demand for early childhood education programs is rising, perhaps because of the deteriorating teaching conditions in primary schools.

to Arab teachers as well. Large numbers of preschools teachers, especially in the Arab sector, have acquired academic degrees during the last decade, and this is true not only for new teachers but also those who were already teaching.

From both an institutional and financial point of view, the pre-primary education system in Israel is, in fact, made of two separate systems. For 5-year-old children, the school system is not very different from primary school, while for the 3-4 age groups, compulsory education legislation has yet to be implemented throughout the country. Hence, public schooling for the 3-4 age groups lags behind schooling for older children in terms of allocation of public resources. Perhaps the most striking expression of this is the gap between the Jewish and Arab sectors – although these gaps appear to have narrowed substantially during the last decade. Nevertheless, the Israeli government needs to understand and internalize the fact that investments in early childhood education will most probably bear fruits over the long run that are much larger than the original investments.

Most of this study was completed before the outbreak of social protests in Israel this past summer. Interestingly, one of the major requests of the protesters was for the State to provide free education for all ages. The Trajtenberg Committee, that was appointed by the government to suggest changes in socioeconomic policy, recommended (among other things) implementing the Compulsory Education Law for children 3-years and older throughout the country, moving gradually to a longer school day in preschools, passing legislation for universal supervision of preschools, and moving the responsibility for the daycare system for 0-3-year-olds to the Ministry of education. These issues are all discussed in this report, which makes it even more relevant than we imagined.

We would like to thank the Bernard van Leer Foundation for encouraging us to undertake this research and for funding it. We also thank the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel research and support staff for their assistance in preparing this report. The Taub Center Education Policy Program Fellows provided valuable comments on an earlier draft. Laura Brass provided invaluable proofreading of the English version. Last but not least, we thank the numerous interviewees who contributed their time and knowledge for enriching our understanding of Israel's early childhood education system.

Ayal Kimhi

Jerusalem, November 2011

Chapter 1: Literature review

A. Development of preschool education in Israel – historical review¹

The historical roots of preschool education in Israel go back to the beginning of the 20th century, in the Hebrew kindergarten authority established in the Diaspora, long before the State of Israel's establishment. The network of Diaspora Hebrew kindergartens, the preschool teachers trained to work in them, and the learning materials prepared for them later constituted the infrastructure for the first Hebrew kindergartens in the Land of Israel. The first Hebrew preschool was established in 1888 in Rishon LeZion and was followed by additional kindergartens in many communities nationwide. The two main objectives of preschools were to impart the Hebrew language to children in order to prepare them for studies at school, and to free working mothers of the need to care for their children for several hours. The educational philosophy of kindergartens was influenced by the American tradition on one hand and by the European tradition on the other, and was the basis for preschool education before the State's establishment and for many years after it. This philosophy places the child and the child's needs at the center (pp. 859-860).

In the 1920s, Hebrew education, including kindergartens, was split into streams. Gradually, three streams took shape with different educational worldviews derived from varied political ideologies: The general stream, the "Mizrahi" stream, and the workers stream that included Kibbutz education. Despite the split, the three streams emphasized national education and cultivation of the Hebrew language. The streams remained in place until 1953, when the Knesset passed the National Education Law.

The credo that would accompany preschool education for many years was formulated a few years before the State's establishment, whereby preschool must constitute a free "educational environment" that allows the child to be exposed to experiences derived from daily life and based on personal exploration. The preschool teacher's place at the time was "backstage," while encouraging the children to engage in various activities and stressing the moral aspects of these activities (P. 861).

¹ This historical survey is based primarily on the paper by Rina Michalovitz that extensively reviewed the preschool education system in Israel. The paper was published in the book "50 Years to the Israeli Education System" in 1999.

The early 1950s presented educators with new roles, including in kindergartens: imparting the language, and shaping a system of shared habits and cultural patterns for children hailing from varied countries and cultures. The national education system also took shape during those years. The Compulsory Education Law from 1949 was also applied to the kindergarten system for 5-year-olds. Alongside compulsory kindergartens, preschools for children aged 3-4 also won the educational establishment's esteem and recognition. During those years, the kindergarten system grew four-fold, a growth rate that posed problems and challenges for the system: the shortage of kindergarten teachers required the accelerated creation of frameworks for training and absorbing hundreds of preschool teachers who did not complete their qualification studies. In order to respond to this, a team of kindergarten inspectors was created to instruct preschool teachers and provide them with advanced training. In the 1950s, the same ideology that placed the child at the center while the teacher remained on the sidelines continued to dominate kindergartens, yet this ideology did not prove successful with immigrant children. In 1958, Dr. Faians Glick proposed the "intensive" method as a way to advance immigrant children. This method offered a more structured daily routine than before, creating opportunities for the teacher to present children with educational contents. This method was later applied throughout the kindergarten system, and although undeclared, in fact constituted the beginning of achievement-oriented education for preschool children in Israel. This also marked the start of the effort to address the advancement of "disadvantaged" children towards closing the gap in achievement between them and well-to-do children (pp. 861-2).

In 1959, a government decision was taken to entrust the responsibility for educating children aged 3-4 into the hands of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry also assumed the role of supporting needy children attending preschool for the 3-4 age group run by women's organizations, thereby replacing the Ministry of Welfare. The Ministry of Education required the employment of qualified preschool teachers only at the preschools it supported, thereby officially defining institutions for children aged 3-4 as educational institutions. In 1960, the objectives of preschool education were first determined and published; these targets included social ideals and a psycho-theoretical basis (p. 863)

In the 1960s and 1970s, social values and historical circumstances affected the development of preschools. In the early 1960s, a growing gap in scholastic

achievements was emerging between children from well-to-do population groups and children from more economically distressed or culturally deprived backgrounds who were characterized as disadvantaged at the time. During those years, Abba Eban, the Minister of Education, coined the term “equal opportunity for all” and designated it as a central value for the education system. The meaning of this term in the preschool education system is the granting of an equal opportunity to attend a preschool to all 3- and 4-year-olds. As the system faced budgetary problems and suffered from a preschool teacher shortage, it was proposed to divide the little that was available among many: that is, to shorten the school day for 5 year-olds to four hours long, while utilizing the freed-up funds to open preschool for 4 year-olds, where children aged 3 and 4 studied in two shifts of two to three hours. Despite the need for “equal opportunity for all,” the plan was only implemented in 1972. In the 1970s, the Early Childhood Committee, which serves as a leading body for preschools, coped with the question of starting to teach and impart reading skills at compulsory kindergartens. The debate featured Israel’s finest theoreticians and researchers at the time who were divided in their views on this issue. However, generally speaking, during that time most of preschool educators objected to the notion of embarking on reading instruction in kindergarten. However, the desire to advance children prompted the implementation of the “intense, structured approach” whereby the contents dealt with at kindergarten became selected contents aimed at advancing the children along a planned path and in defined areas. Another area that developed at the time was work in collaboration with the parents, based on the perception that the parent is an equal partner in the educational effort (pp. 863-5).

In the 1980s, the setting of targets and characterization of educational contents were greatly affected by Piaget’s theory, which set clear boundaries as to what can and cannot be done with a child cognitively speaking. This limitation as to what a preschool-aged child can and cannot perceive minimized the spectrum of subjects and contents that appeared to be worthy of addressing at this age. Piaget’s theory merged with previous conceptions, and the approaches that determined the overall atmosphere at preschools were derived from all of these doctrines: the preschool teacher was perceived as someone meant to develop the child emotionally and socially and perceiving the child’s spontaneous activity – mostly dramatic play and creation using various substances – was seen as an area where the teacher has no right to interfere

and something which should not be exploited or used as a tool for learning. Those years marked the beginning of a search for new ways to develop scientific thinking and cultivating creativity. A natural science curriculum for preschools was developed at the time and the development of creativity began to be addressed as a value and educational objective. Simultaneously, the pressure for academic achievements was growing in Israel and throughout Western society, also reaching kindergartens, which were facing demands for more intensively addressing the preparation of children for school (pp. 865-6).

In the 1980s, the preschool education system was affected by two prominent social trends: firstly, the rise in the rate of working women who were mothers to young children; secondly, growing parental awareness of the child's scholastic achievements and concern about success as a condition for placing the child at a worthy position on the social ladder. These attitudes boosted the involvement of parents in the education of their children. The rise in the rate of working mothers to preschool-aged children encouraged municipal leaders to open preschools for children aged 3-4 as necessary, thereby gradually implementing the recommendations submitted by the various national committees of the past to include these ages in educational frameworks. Upon the opening of pre-compulsory kindergartens at local municipalities – subsidized by the Ministry of Education in the form of a sliding payment scale based on the parents' economic means – the number of children at these ages attending daycare centers operated by women's organizations was minimized and the freed-up classes were able to take in younger children. This partly addressed the need to include children aged 0-3 in educational frameworks (pp. 866-7).

In the early 1970s, the Ministry of Education established a team for planning education in the coming decade, headed by Dr. Elad Peled, the Ministry's Director-General. The report produced by the team was published in 1976 in a document entitled "Education in Israel in the 1980s." The report set the following targets for preschool education policy. The first five-year plan was to be dedicated to ages 3-4, as follows: guaranteeing a spot for every child at this age in preschool, developing curricula for preschoolers, and training teaching manpower. The second five-year plan was to be dedicated to addressing children aged 0-3, as follows: earmarking resources for construction, training manpower, and research that would prompt the formulation of educational programs and the shaping of work patterns. The targets set for the

education of children in the 3-4 age group were mostly achieved: in the 1980s, some 90 percent of 3-year-olds and about 97 percent of 4-year-olds attended preschool, in the Jewish sector. The picture in the Arab sector, on the other hand, was very different. The document's second target, addressing the 0-3 age group, was postponed until the early 1990s. Growing parental involvement and the concern for the child's preparedness for school greatly influenced the development of educational work at preschools. Parental pressures prompted the preschool system to adopt, in practice, a hidden curriculum; in this framework, the activities of dramatic play and free expression gradually lost their traditional and superior place, as they were no longer perceived as activities that can be credited with direct contribution to advancing the child towards achievement (p. 867).

Until 1982, preschool education was part of primary education, and hence it did not have an exclusive budget and separate representation. In 1982, a separate committee was appointed for "preschool education" which was no longer under the primary education system, but rather, parallel to it. However, this committee had a pedagogical role only and its head was not given tools, budgets or administrative powers. The reform in the Ministry of Education and Culture structure adopted at the end of the 1980s by its Director, Dr. Shimshon Shoshani, prompted the establishment of a pedagogical administration intended to run the "preschool education department" as one of three age-based departments in the education system. This official organizational move had far-reaching implications for the development of preschool education in Israel. The obligation and rights of preschool education were derived from the very definition of the system's structure and placement of preschool education in this structure: preschool education now had obligations and responsibility for contributing to the realization of the overall education system's overarching objectives and targets, and rights as a party to shaping educational policy and utilizing the system's resources.

The new department set targets for itself and defined the scope of its activity as a body meant to address the education needs of children in the 0-6 age group. The set goals and objectives included the need to prepare an up-to-date syllabus for preschools that would reflect the changes in Israeli society and its needs, as well as the changes in the developmental and educational theories since the previous curriculum, which was formulated in the 1960s; the need to develop and prepare

materials for various areas of knowledge in line with the new syllabus and to update them regularly; building programs meant to educate the child as a consumer of culture, and training teams that would guide the children in the arts; finding proper ways for involving parents in educational work at the preschool; and providing a response to differing needs stemming from linguistic and cultural diversity or different social backgrounds. These objectives drew attention to the promotion of early childhood education in the Arab sector, as well as to the development of educational programs for children aged 0-3 and the training of educators at daycare centers and nursery schools. The unique objectives for education in State-religious preschools were also formulated during that time.

The attention given to areas of knowledge and contents that were not dealt with previously at preschools prompted the establishment of a unit dedicated to preschool education curricula that embarked on the preparation of instruction and learning materials; the establishment of a broad network of pedagogical centers that presented the new instruction and learning materials, making them very widespread within a few years; and the establishment of a system of professional guidance and instruction for preschool staff by specially trained preschool teachers. This system also opened the door to professional advancement for preschool teachers. The changes required the preschool supervisory board to redefine its role: It no longer had individualized supervision as its main work, but rather, the supervisory system took on the role of educational leader for the community of preschool teachers, mentors and instructors. The organizational reform of course led to a situation whereby the preschool education system was now given resources. As to preschool education in the Arab sector – it mostly included, before the reform, compulsory kindergartens adjacent to elementary schools that for this reason were officially entrusted in the hands of school inspectors, with preschool inspectors mostly given the role of professional supervision. The reform gave rise to the need to develop a supervision and instruction system for Arab preschools, a move that greatly changed the activity in Arab preschools (pp. 867 – 871).²

² The issue also arose in the State Comptroller's Report No. 42 in 1991 and the Financial Report for 1990, that noted the five-year plan for the education system in the Arab sector that was published in the same year and that dealt with two viewpoints on preschool education: supervision and curriculum. In the five-year plan it was decided to budget more positions for supervision in the Arab sector. According to the State Comptroller, though, this was still too small an addition to allow reasonable

The 1990s saw the development of new curricula: programs for developing life skills; scientific-technological education, mostly math, natural sciences and computers; and the cultivation of attachment to the Jewish culture (following the Shenhar Committee conclusions). The large immigration wave from the former Soviet Union presented the system and preschool teachers with an old-new mission: imparting the Hebrew language and Israeli culture. These years also saw the education system undergoing two significant organizational changes: the first one was the decision taken in the wake of a compromise between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Union following a petition asking the High Court of Justice (HCJ 3703/90, 3951/90)³ to allow preschool teachers to work five days a week, even though preschools, just like schools, operate six days a week. The decision led to the introduction of "complementary teachers" at preschools in order to substitute for preschool teachers on their day off. The need to assign another, complementary preschool teacher to every Israel preschool class posed a difficult test to the education system, as it required a significant addition of teachers given available manpower. Several years and an effort on the training front were required until a sufficient number of qualified teachers were available to all preschools. The second change was the decision on "institutional advanced training" for the entire preschool teacher community, made in the framework of the salary agreement between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers' Union (pp. 871-4).

It is fair to say that the most fundamental changes in the education system (and not only on the legislative front) occurred in the first twenty years after the State's establishment. From the end of the 1960s to the mid-1980s there were almost no new laws that had any effect on the education system's structure and contents. Inasmuch as legislative changes were made, they were mostly undertaken on the basis of

supervision of the preschools. The report claims that the amount of supervision of preschools in the Arab sector does not allow the inclusion of pre-kindergarten schools and, therefore, the majority of the private preschools (which are in principle also subject to regulation and where the majority of children in the Arab sector learn since there are few public preschools) operate without a license and with limited knowledge of what goes on in them. The report also related to the existing situation where the majority of kindergartens in the Arab sector are housed within the primary schools buildings and subject to the school administration. The Comptroller also found that in many cases these kindergartens were in buildings not meant for this use and without the facilities appropriate for kindergartens (pages 390-9).

³ See the letter of Attorney Efraim Yifhar from 27.4.2011. The Supreme Court case was brought following the intentions of the Ministry of Education to move to a five-day work week. Although this did not ultimately happen, the preschool teachers' move to working five days became the accepted norm.

secondary legislation or through administrative orders. An interesting change started to take place from the mid-1980s up until 1990 when the Knesset passed three important education laws: the law extending compulsory education to the 3-4 age group (1984), the Special Education Law (1988) and the Long School Day Law (1990). However, despite the time that has passed since these three laws were legislated, they were only partly implemented. The law on extending compulsory education in the 3-4 age group is the focal point of this study. In their article, Blass and Adler (2004) claim that this law was not brought before the Knesset and approved by it on the basis of broad public debate and in-depth considerations, but rather, as the result of an initiative by a few Knesset members representing specific interest groups and not necessarily due to their ideological background or party platform.⁴

B. Extension of Compulsory Education Law to the 3-4 age group: Legislative process

The history of the 1984 Compulsory Education Law for children aged 3-4 is rather long. The discussion into the possibility of applying the law to the education of the 3-4 age group started back in the late 1970s and the issue was included in the coalition deals of the government elected in 1981. The main activists in favor of passing the law were Knesset members and public organizations such as women's groups that were operating preschools. The support for extending the Compulsory Education Law to children aged 3-4 was based on the underlying assumption – which is supported by intuition, accumulated educational experience and quite a few scientific studies – that investing in preschool education produces high educational and social return, making a significant contribution to the child's education and potentially minimizing social gaps.

The struggle to pass the law was led by several Knesset members, and mostly by the chairs of the Knesset's Education Committee and several Committee members. In 1984, the 16th amendment to the Compulsory Education Law was approved, bringing the compulsory education age down to three. Various parties expressed their strong support for the law in the early 1980s, including the *Histadrut* labor union federation, the President's Council for the Welfare of the Child established by the President's

⁴ The history of the law as described is based on the paper by Blass and Adler.

wife, the late Ms. Ofira Navon, and various women's organizations.⁵ In the late 1990s, other bodies endorsed the law (The Democratic Mizrahi Rainbow, The Arab Monitoring Committee for Education, and several public organizations such as *Shatil*, *Adalah* and others).⁶

The position adopted by the Ministry of Education's administration on the law was highly hesitant almost all along the way. The reservations were based on three main arguments:

1. The concern that funding the law would entail using the existing budget, thereby forcing the Ministry to cut back other budgetary clauses in order to implement the move.
2. The sense – which was normally not expressed publicly – that had it been possible to boost the education system's budget, it would have been better to invest in other targets.
3. The absence of organizational and physical infrastructure to implement the law, particularly in the Arab sector, which was to be the main beneficiary of this legislation.

Despite the Ministry's general position, the overwhelming majority of officials in charge of preschool education at the Ministry of Education supported the spirit of the law and everything it entailed in terms of the demands from the system in the areas of planning and implementation.⁷

The Ministry of Education adopted several steps in order to minimize the effect of the law's sweeping approval and attempted to facilitate a gradual implementation of the legislation over time. For example, the Ministry of Education proposed that the law first be only applied to children aged 4. Another proposal was to apply the law

⁵ See the position paper by N. Pesah of the *Histadrut* "The Free Education Law (Preschools) – the Histadrut's Position" from November 1982, and the speeches to the Knesset committees by Ms. Matalon of WIZO, Ms Rita Gur of *Na'amat* and Ms. Sanhedrai of *Emunah* (Protocol of the Education Committee No. 124 from 17.11.82). See also the comments of these representatives in the Knesset Education Committee meeting from 1.11.82.

⁶ Protocol of the Knesset Education Committee from 14.7.97.

⁷ This is not the only instance where the direct supervisors of a given area in the Ministry of Education express support while the Ministry has a different policy. This is also not surprising since the professional ideological loyalty of supervisions is to their specialty while the ministry administrators have an overall loyalty and responsibility.

gradually, in line with existing needs in the various communities. The Ministry of Education's position was expressed by its then-Chief Scientist, who wrote: "As we attempt to devise an appropriate approach for the important mission before us, we must keep in mind the need for quality, continuity and adherence to a suitable concept. At a time of obvious pressures for rapid progress, there are better reasons for cautious progress while undertaking constant scrutiny."⁸

In 1982 in response to demands articulated by the Knesset's Education Committee, the Ministry of Education established a team to look into the issue. The official in charge of Arab education directed the team's attention to the fact that the problem only existed in the Arab sector.⁹ The team submitted a proposal whose financial aspects were not accepted by the Ministry of Finance, whereby the funding source for the law's implementation is meant to be drawn from the introduction of a special fee in the framework of National Insurance payments (totaling four thousandths, similar to the method adopted with the extension of the Compulsory Education Law to the age of 16 and the annulment of tuition fees in post-primary education, in 1978).¹⁰

At a later stage, during the discussion on legislation for applying the law in the 1990s, the law was also endorsed by the Ministry of Education political leadership, with the argument in favor being mostly political – that is, the fear that *Shas*' education system would grow stronger. This was expressed by then Minister of Education, Rabbi Yitzhak Levy, as he lauded the law's approval: "Many of them (the children) are attending places that I think the State would do well to supervise; that it would be appropriate for them to be part of the education system."¹¹ Knesset Member Anat Maor also raised this argument while speaking at the same session, which constituted the concluding discussion following the law's second and third reading.¹² This 1999 session, where the decision to apply the law was made, took place during an election campaign and was therefore replete with statements regarding the law's significance and the crucial need to approve it.

⁸ The introduction to the paper on planning education for four-year-olds by S. Kugelmass (without a date – although most probably sometime in 1984).

⁹ Mimeograph from 5.7.82.

¹⁰ See the comments by the Deputy Director-General of the Ministry of Education and Culture before the Knesset Education Committee from 10.5.82, Protocol No. 65.

¹¹ The proceedings of the Knesset No. 274, 11.1.99, in a discussion on the second and third reading of the law to expand compulsory education to ages 3-4.

¹² Ibid.

Local government representatives typically adopted a similar position to that of the Ministry of Education for fear that the law would burden them with expenses they would not be able to meet in the absence of additional designated funding. They also expressed a demand for greater consideration of their positions and for their full participation in applying the law.¹³

The Ministry of Finance's position on the law was publicly supportive, but resistant in practice, with the consistent policy being a postponement of the implementation through various means and/or, alternately, a tradeoff of the general law in return for the granting of specific concessions. In 1982, then Minister of Finance Yoram Aridor declared his support for extending the free Compulsory Education Law to the 3-4 age group.¹⁴ He said that he decided to approve the plan despite public expenditure cutbacks in order to express through it the government's special sensitivity to educational issues in general and to early childhood education in particular. However, in 1983, a Ministry of Finance representative already announced the ministry's objection to extending the free Compulsory Education Law to children aged 3-4, and proposed instead to adopt a policy of discounts.¹⁵ Ever since then, the Ministry of Finance consistently objected to the law's legislation and raised various reservations. The main point of the arguments were as follows: there is no need to absolve well-to-do individuals from paying (as result of sweeping legislation), and it would be better to grant discounts to disadvantaged individuals; the legislation would require massive construction that cannot be funded at this time; and, there is a shortage of appropriate educational staff, a fact that prevents the law's implementation.¹⁶ Ministry of Finance representatives reiterated the same arguments in the 1990s.¹⁷

In 1996, twelve years after the amendment to the Compulsory Education Law regarding its application to children aged 3-4 was passed, Knesset Member Tamar Gozansky submitted a bill to the Knesset aimed at immediate implementation of the law. Her bill was supported by 46 Knesset members and passed the first reading, but was suspended again by the Economic Arrangements Law. A year later, Knesset

¹³ Comments of Mr. Yoel Shiftan, head of the Education Division in the Jerusalem Municipality – 1.3.82, 29.1.82, 4.1.83.

¹⁴ *Ha'aretz*, 2.9.82.

¹⁵ Protocol of the Knesset Education Committee from 4.1.83.

¹⁶ Izzy Kaplan, the Knesset Education Committee, 15.5.85.

¹⁷ Y. Indoran, the Knesset Education Committee, 21.7.97, H. Peletz 27.7.97, 14.12.98.

Members Anat Maor and Professor Shlomo Ben-Ami joined in endorsing a similar bill. Finally, the law was again approved in July of 1999 under the name “Compulsory Education Decree (Application to Preschools), 1999”, stipulating that the legislation will be applied over a ten year period, in order to prevent the ongoing postponement of its implementation. As noted, the law was passed by the Netanyahu government during an election campaign and was later approved by the newly elected government, under Ehud Barak. When the law was passed in January 1999, it was already clear that the economic situation was grim and that Benjamin Netanyahu’s government faced instability on the political front as well.

During debates at the Knesset plenum in the second and third readings, the positions of Knesset members on the law were clearly expressed. These views also reflected the positions of the Knesset members who promoted the original bill in 1984 and which were expressed throughout the legislation process. Four main factors compelled an endorsement of the law according to the Knesset members.¹⁸

1. The importance of early childhood education – (“investing one shekel in early childhood saves seven shekels later on.”)
2. Easing the economic burden faced by young couples and the middle class and making it easier for women to join the workforce.
3. Contributing to equality between Jews and Arabs.
4. Contending with the alternative offered by *Shas*.

In April 2001, the “Compulsory Education Decree (Application to Preschools), 2001” was passed with the aim of ensuring the application of the original law from 1984. In the framework of this decree, free compulsory education was extended to children aged 3-4 in dozens of local authorities and additional regional councils, many of them in the Arab and Bedouin sector.

The extension of the Compulsory Education Law can be viewed as a move solely aimed at transferring funds to the general public, but also as the fulfillment of an important social principle whereby once a certain national service becomes virtually universal, the State must assume its funding.

C. The law’s implementation process

¹⁸ Knesset protocol no. 274, 11.1.99, the words of Knesset Member Anat Maor.

In order to understand the manner in which the law was applied in its final form, one should be familiarized with the state of preschool education before the legislation's approval. Until the law's application, despite the legislation in the 1980s that seemingly required children to enter the education system starting at the age of 3, preschool attendance for the 3-4 age group was not compulsory in practice and parents paid for their children's education. At the same time, the tuition fees at preschools were on a sliding scale determined by the parents' income and place of residence. Parents with low incomes or ones who resided in communities included in the neighborhood renewal project, in border communities or in National Priority Areas A received various discounts of up to 90 percent of the full cost of tuition.¹⁹

In 1984, even before the law's approval, most Jewish children aged 3-4 attended public preschools (49 percent of 2-year-olds, 84 percent of 3-year-olds and 98 percent of 4-year-olds.)²⁰ Other children, especially aged 3, attended private preschools. In the Arab sector, on the other hand, only some 30 percent of 4-year-olds and about 20 percent of 3-year-olds attended preschool in 1984. The low rates of preschool attendance in the Arab sector stemmed from various reasons, including a shortage of educational manpower, the absence of physical infrastructure, the lack of awareness of the importance of early childhood education and a low rate of female participation in the workforce. It is therefore clear that the application of the Compulsory Education Law to children in the 3-4 age groups has a varying influence on different sectors. While in the Jewish sector most of the law's effect had to do with lowering the financial burden faced by parents, in the Arab sector it was mostly about including children who previously did not attend orderly, supervised educational frameworks, on condition that the manpower problem and the need for buildings for classrooms was resolved. In this context it is imperative to understand that the meaning of the word "compulsory" in the law is mutual and obligates not only the parents but also, and most importantly, the State. For years, the policy of enforcing the law on the parents was very lenient and there were only a few cases where parents faced indictments over this matter. That is, the word "compulsory" is chiefly directed at the

¹⁹ It is important to note that the maximum income threshold for tuition exemption eligibility was rather low, and therefore most parents paid full tuition.

²⁰ Statistical Abstract of Israel No. 36, Table 22 10, p. 619.

State and its responsibility for implementing the law.²¹ Moreover, the State's obligation mostly applies to the Arab sector, where the prevailing situation demanded intensive intervention and considerable investment by the State.

As noted, the Ministry of Education had reservations about the law. However, at the time of passing it, Ministry heads could not explicitly object to legislation that appeared to benefit the public to such extent. And indeed, even though the Ministry of Education could not officially object to the law, in practice the Ministry along with the Ministry of Finance (each for its own reasons) delayed the legislation process and later the law's implementation process, as evidenced by the preparations to apply the law to children aged 3-4 in the Arab sectors.²²

Prior to the law's application, most parents to children aged 3-4 (with the exception of parents whose income was low or who resided in the aforementioned regions) were required to pay full tuition for their children's education or else were granted only slight discounts. As noted, the "Compulsory Education Decree (Application to Preschools), 1999" asserted that the law's implementation will be phased, yet within ten years the legislation was supposed to apply to the entire public. In 1999/2000, the first school year where the law was implemented, it was applied to two population groups: 4-year-olds in communities located in National Priority Areas A, and children aged 3-4 in neighborhoods and communities included in the neighborhood renewal project, at border-area communities, and in all communities at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder.²³ The implication of the decision was that most children in the Jewish sector whom the law applied to in the first phase of its implementation enjoyed a full or partial exemption from tuition fees even before. That is, the law had almost no effect on the situation in the Jewish sector, neither in terms of the number of children attending preschools nor in terms of the tuition fees paid for their education. On the other hand, the decision to apply the law to all the communities in clusters 1-2

²¹ This matter also required the attention of Knesset members who discussed the bill and feared the implication of obligating the parents in line with this law. They too saw this duty as mostly applying to the State. See protocol of the Knesset's education committee from 29.5.84.

²² The State Comptroller's Report no. 42 for the year 1991 and to the fiscal year 1990 addressed this (pp. 390-9). That year, 7 years after the law was passed, only 25 percent of 3-year-olds in the Arab sector and only 55 percent of children aged 4 studied in public education institutions. For the sake of comparison, some 96 percent of children attended compulsory kindergartens, similarly to the situation that prevailed in the Jewish sector.

²³ In the lowest clusters (1-2) of the socioeconomic ranking of the Central Bureau of Statistics.

of the socioeconomic ladder was highly significant for the Arab sector. What nevertheless prevented the change implied by the law's application in the Arab sector was the fact that in many cases the Ministry of Education received an "exemption" from implementing the law because of ill-prepared Arab communities, both in terms of available buildings and the required manpower. This created a situation whereby in the 1999/2000 school year the law was only applied to some 53,000 of the 75,000 children it was supposed to apply to. Moreover, about 37,000 of the children whom the law applied to were previously exempt from tuition fees. Only some 15,000 children joined preschools as result of the law's partial implementation, due to the fact that their communities were included in the lowest socioeconomic clusters. And so, in the 2000/2001 school year, some 13,500 children had not yet attended preschools, even though they were included in the category the law applies to, as result of a shortage of preschool buildings, teachers and budgets – all of them in the Arab sector.

The words of Ministry of Education representatives in a joint session of the Committee for Promoting the Status of Children and the Education and Culture Committee, held on February 27, 2001 to discuss the application of the law, indicated that there was no master plan for implementing the law in the area of construction, in the area of manpower qualification, and in the area of supervising and instructing this manpower. Hence, the committees demanded the following from the Ministry of Education:

1. To hand over to them, within a month, a plan that would detail the opening of the missing preschools at the various communities in clusters 1 and 2, in order to apply the law to all the children in these communities.
2. To prepare, within a month, a specific plan, including budgetary costs, in respect to the law's applications in cluster 3 communities as of the 2001/2002 school year.
3. To draft a plan for the establishment of preschools for the 3-4 age group in unrecognized communities, as well as in communities where residents did not enjoy the application of the law due to the absence of preschools in their place of residence, or alternately to arrange for transportation for the children to preschools in nearby communities.

The application decree passed in April 2001 – “Compulsory Education Decree (Application in Preschools), 2001” – apparently attempted to address these problems. However, despite the improvement over the years in implementing the law in the Arab and Bedouin sector, there was still no full implementation, even in cases where the law requires it. As noted, this fact is related to the ongoing scarcity of infrastructure, which is mostly expressed in a shortage of preschool classrooms. The state of affairs in east Jerusalem is rather grave, and possibly even worse than it is in other Arab communities. A meeting held in 2007 at the Knesset’s Education Committee, headed by Knesset Member Rabbi Michael Melchior, indicated that the shortage in preschool classrooms for children aged 3, 4 and 5, which joins the serious shortage in school classrooms there, is immense and unprecedented.²⁴ Among other things, the problem stems from the fact that the Jerusalem municipality is positioned in cluster 4, that is, it is not part of the two lowest clusters to which the law applies. East Jerusalem is also not included in the neighborhood renewal program, and therefore the law does not apply to the children residing there. Following two petitions submitted to the High Court of Justice by east Jerusalem residents in 2001, the Court ordered the relevant parties to act intensively in order to improve the state of educational infrastructure in east Jerusalem. However, for various reasons that were also noted in the State Comptroller’s 2008 report, the state of affairs in east Jerusalem is still far from being satisfactory. Even when budgets are earmarked for land confiscation for public use, in order to plan and construct educational structures, affairs are managed apathetically as a result of the flawed conduct of all parties involved: the Ministry of Education, the Jerusalem municipality, and the Jerusalem Education Administration.²⁵

In 2009, the Knesset’s Research and Information Center published a document drafted ahead of the Finance Committee’s session slated to discuss the law and its application.²⁶ The meeting’s objective was to discuss the intention to postpone the date of completing the law’s application by ten years, as proposed in the Economic Arrangements Law of that year. In fact, the 2009/2010 Economic Arrangements Law constituted the seventh postponement of completing the application of the

²⁴ Protocol no. 300 of the Education, Culture and Sports Committee from 12.11.2007.

²⁵ Annual report 59b in the year 2008 and in the fiscal year 2007, the construction of classrooms in east Jerusalem, pp. 615-659.

²⁶ Yuval Vurgan, "Postponing the implementation of the compulsory education law for ages 3-4", the Knesset’s Research and Information Center, 1.7.2009.

Compulsory Education Law among children aged 3-4. In the years 1985-1988, the completion of the law was postponed six times using the Economic Arrangements Law. At the end of the day, the 2009/2010 Economic Arrangements Law lowered the postponement of applying the law from ten years to six only. That is, as of today, the law is supposed to be applied to all Israeli children by the 2014/2015 school year, 30 years after it was passed. The last Economic Arrangements Law, for the years 2011/2012, makes no mention of the issue, as the Ministry of Finance promised Education Minister Gideon Sa'ar that it would not include clauses pertaining to education in the Economic Arrangements Law.²⁷

In recent years, many studies have shown the importance of early childhood education, including the significance of fully applying free compulsory education from age 3 and over. In 2008, an expert committee on behalf of the Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities – “The committee for examining preschool education methods and their relationship to maximizing the benefit of school,” headed by Professor Pnina Klein – explicitly recommended this. The committee asserted that “it appears that applying the Compulsory Education Law from age 3, at least, is the required minimum for granting an equal opportunity to every young child to live a life of dignity within society at present, and also in the future, once he or she grows up and joins the country’s adult population” (p. 254). The researchers also noted that research evidence has shown that investing public funds in early childhood education pays off economically both in the short and long term.²⁸

The National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel, headed by Mr. Shlomo Dovrat (The Dovrat Commission), addressed the issue. The Dovrat Commission was appointed by the government in September of 2003 in order to undertake a wide-ranging examination of the State of Israel’s education system and recommend a comprehensive plan for change – pedagogically, structurally and organizationally – and also outline the way for implementing this plan. The commission’s final report was submitted to the government in January of 2005.²⁹ The Dovrat Commission asserted that the education system is responsible for developing

²⁷ Tani Goldstein, “Free education for preschool children: The law that will be buried this year too”, Ynet, 17.8.10.

²⁸ Pnina Klein and Yaacov Yablon (editors), 2008. *From Research to Practice in Early Childhood Education*, Jerusalem: The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

²⁹ The National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel (Dovrat Commission), the National Education Plan, January 2005.

the personality, creativity, and various talents of all Israeli children aged 3 to 18 in order to fully maximize their abilities as human beings living a life of quality, meaning and commitment, through **special advancement of early education** and continual nurturing of weaker pupils. The commission asserted that “pedagogical activity will be fulfilled as a continuous and consistent sequence starting at the age of 3,” and later explicitly recommended to extend free education to all children aged 3-4, and, in addition, to maintain a full (long) school day at all preschools and schools.³⁰ As a rule, the Dovrat Commission’s recommendations were based on maintaining the Ministry of Education’s existing budgetary framework. At the same time, the commission’s report noted that on the issue of extending free education and extending the school day for children aged 3-4 – a major component in the commission’s plan – a special budgetary supplement would be required after all.³¹ This supplement involves expenditures on physical infrastructure, as the commission recommended that every preschool classroom for the 3-4 age group would offer the conditions for providing a lunchtime meal and enable the children to rest. The report also noted that “extending education rates and lengthening the school day at preschools for children aged 3-4 will start as soon as is possible and be undertaken in line with the pace of designating the required budgets and preparing the required physical infrastructure.”³²

Pursuant to the Dovrat Commission’s recommendations, a proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Education’s administration in 2006 on early childhood education policy. This proposal was centered on a recommendation to extend the educational continuity, and while doing so to expand the scope of entitlement for free education in the 3-4 age group. This recommendation offered several alternatives, including the application of free compulsory education to the entire population, a phased extension of the communities where free education is offered by placing limits in accordance with socioeconomic clusters as classified by the Central Bureau of Statistics (for example: implementing free education in all communities categorized in cluster 6 and below), boosting the Ministry of Education’s participation in paying tuition fees in

³⁰ Ibid, chapter 2, recommendation 2.1, "maintaining a full school day from age 3 to age 18". As to children aged 3-4, it was recommended that the parents would be given the choice to send their children to a reduced number of preschool hours per week.

³¹ Ibid, chapter 6, "Resource concentration, adequate and fair funding, and streamlining."

³² Ibid, chapter 9, recommendation 9.4.2, "Implementing the plan in kindergartens", in the framework of the full implementation of the plan, which will be phased and spread over five years.

communities where the law was not applied, and so on. These recommendations were not implemented.

D. The law's implementation at this time

As of 2008, the law was applied to 108,000 children aged 3-4, which constitute only 37 percent of all children aged 3-4 in Israel and 50 percent of all the children in the 3-4 age group attending public preschools supervised by the Ministry of Education.

The rate of children in the 3-4 age group whom the law was applied to in communities classified as clusters 1-2 in the socioeconomic ranking of the Central Bureau of Statistics (that is, the two lowest clusters) is very high and approaches 100 percent. Today, in 2011, the orientation is to complete the application of the law to the whole of cluster 3. However, in clusters ranked a little higher, such as 4 and 5, the rate of application is lower, while there are still tens of thousands of children aged 3-4 whom the law has not yet been applied to. As noted, in communities where the Compulsory Education Law was not applied to children aged 3-4, there is a system of graded tuition fees. In these communities, the costs of operating preschools are shared by the State and local authority, which offer partial funding, and by the children's parents, who pay in accordance with the family's income. The parents' participation rate is determined based on a sliding scale divided to ten levels, where the maximum discount today reaches 90 percent.

According to up-to-date figures received from the Ministry of Education, as of today the law is applied in 151 communities, municipalities, local councils and regional councils, in a full or partial manner, from age 3 or only from age 4. In most cases the communities are included in the definition of National Priority Area A, border area, neighborhood renewal program or communities in clusters 1, 2 and 3 in the socioeconomic ladder. However, the list also includes communities that do not meet these definitions and are, nonetheless, included among the communities where the law was implemented. Meanwhile, in some cases the list does not include communities that it should have comprised based on the definitions. The reasons for including one community or another mostly have to do with the exertion of political pressures and various types of considerations. The communities where the law has been applied are as follows:

- Communities that are fully included in the framework of the compulsory education decree for ages 3-4: 76 municipalities and local councils and 258 communities (in 19 different regional councils);
- Communities that are partly included in the compulsory education decree for ages 3-4, in accordance with the classification of neighborhoods included in the neighborhood renewal program: 26 municipalities and local councils;
- Communities fully included in the framework of the compulsory education decree for children aged 4 only: 27 communities and local councils and 261 communities (in 24 different regional councils);
- The group of communities known as “The Seven Communities”: Beit Shemesh, Afula, Carmiel, Nazareth-Ilit, Migdal HaEmek, Akko and Kiryat Gat, which received discounts of 80 percent for children aged 3-4, and also Tiberias (ages 3-4) and Katzir (from age 3).

E. The number of children per classroom and the adult-child ratio

The maximum number of pupils in a preschool class, both in compulsory kindergarten preschools (children aged 5) and in pre-compulsory and pre-pre-compulsory preschools (ages 3-4) is 35.³³

Recently, two bills³⁴ were submitted that proposed a gradual decrease in the maximum number of pupils in a preschool class, so that the number of children in one classroom will be no more than **28**. The expert committee headed by Professor Pnina Klein, which submitted its recommendations in 2008, also recommended a significant lowering of the number of pupils in a preschool class. The committee’s recommendations noted that “in order to allow the education team to become familiar with the personal characteristics of all pupils, address them while showing sensitivity and devotion to their unique needs, and enable the children to develop in a supportive educational environment, the committee recommends that a class comprise 14-16 children in the 3-4 age group, 16-20 children in the 5-6 age group, and no more than

³³ A special circular for educational institutions and local authorities from 17.6.1966 signed by Director General Hanoach Rinot, see quote in “Know your rights, Teachers’ Union 2011.”

³⁴ Bill no. p/17/2345 by Knesset Member Nadia Hilou and bill no. p/17/2421 by Knesset Member Ronit Tirosh and Knesset Member Michale Melchior. Both bills were submitted on March 19, 2007.

25 children in first grade. In order to maintain the proper ratio between the number of adults and number of children in each age group, it is recommended that a team comprising a preschool teacher/teacher and assistant be designated for each class.”³⁵

A document published by the Knesset’s research and information center in July 2007 (Vurgan, 2007) offered up-to-date figures for that year regarding the number of pupils per class at compulsory kindergartens (children aged 5), at pre-compulsory and pre-pre-compulsory preschools (children aged 3-4), and in mixed preschools (where children in the 3-4 age group and children aged 5 study in the same classroom). The figures were also categorized according to status (official education and recognized education that is not official), supervision (State, State-religious and other), and sector. The main figures in these documents were as follows:

- In 57 percent of preschool classes (some 6,800 classes) there were more than 28 pupils per class in the 2006/2007 school year. In 42 percent of them there were 31-35 pupils per class. In 3 percent of the classes (370 classes) there were more than 35 pupils per class.
- In compulsory kindergartens only (excluding children aged 3-4) the rate of classes with more than 28 pupils was 64 percent.
- In the official education system, the rate of preschool classes with more than 28 pupils was 61 percent (in compulsory kindergarten only the rate was even higher: 68 percent). On the other hand, in the recognized but unofficial education system, the rate of classes with more than 28 pupils was 48 percent.
- The rate of preschool classes with more than 28 pupils in the national education system was 63 percent, compared to 52 percent in State-religious preschools and 48 percent in ultra-Orthodox preschools.
- The rate of classes that included more than 28 pupils in Jewish sector preschools was 54 percent, compared to 69 percent in Arab preschools, 59 percent in Bedouin preschools, and 57 percent in Druze preschools.

³⁵ Pnina Klein and Yaacov Yablon (editors), 2008. *From Research to Practice In Early Childhood Education*, Jerusalem: The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

Chapter 2: Mapping the players in Israel's preschool education system

This chapter will map out the various players in Israel's preschool education system and review the role of each – government ministries, local authorities, organizations that operate daycare centers and parties that operate complementary programs – in planning the system, budgeting, supervision, determination of contents and qualification of educational staff.

The issue of training preschool teachers will for the most part be discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter is based on 17 interviews with Ministry of Education and Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor officials and coordinators and managers of early childhood departments at various local authorities: two large cities, one medium-sized city, two regional councils, an ultra-Orthodox city, a recognized Bedouin city, and a local Arab council; the directors of three organizations that operate daycare centers; and the employees of an organization that operates one of the supplementary programs. We honor our promise to keep the interviewees' personal details confidential, and therefore at many junctions later in the chapter we shall note that the information in question is based on the interviews, without providing the interviewee's name or interview location.

Ever since the establishment of the Preschool Education Department, as part of a reform in the Ministry of Education and Culture's structure that was adopted in the late 1980s, the new department defined the scope of its activity to address the educational needs of children aged 0-6. At the same time, the Ministry does not bear the legal responsibility for this entire age range, but rather, only for the 3-6 year-old age group. The younger ages, 0-3, come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor (henceforth, the ITL Ministry) through its daycare center and pre-nursery home-care department.¹ Other ministries, such as the Ministries of Welfare and Health, play a certain role in the system, although a marginal one. The splitting of responsibility for early childhood education between the two ministries has historical reasons, yet in all

¹ The definition of the 0-3 age group refers to children who as of September 1st were not yet 2 years and 8 months old (the minimum age for registering to a municipal preschool). The definition of the 3-6 age group refers to children who as September 1st were at least 2 years and 8 months old and ranging all the way to the age of 5 years and 8 months. The 3-6 age group also includes the children who stayed at compulsory kindergarten for an additional year.

interviews we held, the interviewees endorsed the view that the Ministry of Education would do well to assume responsibility for the entire early childhood age range, from birth to the age of 6, and that it fails to do so for political and budgetary reasons.

Daycare centers in Israel were established by women's organizations before the State's establishment as part of an approach that encouraged both men and women to join the workforce and were meant, particularly, to assist working women. The daycare centers were designated for both the children of working women and for children in disadvantaged families, and constituted a framework for children aged up to 4 before entering kindergarten. Upon the State's establishment, the commitment to children's education in established frameworks was evidenced through the Compulsory Education Law of 1949,² which today applies to children aged 3 and over. However, no legislation or regulations were designated for frameworks for children aged up to 3. Following the State's establishment, daycare centers run by various women's organizations continued to operate under the same format, and government intervention was only seen through the placement of disadvantaged children and the children of new immigrants in these frameworks and their fees were covered almost fully by the welfare services. In the 1970s, a change started to take shape in Israel in the way the daycare center system was perceived: economic and social changes, which also led to a significant rise in the participation of women in the workforce, prompted many parents to expect daycare centers to serve as a framework that also provides their children with a proper education. In 1973, the Ministry of Labor established a unit for women's advancement, which fit in with the existing trend and provided momentum to the development of daycare centers by women's groups and other organizations, and started to subsidize tuition fees at daycare centers for working mothers (Fichtelberg-Barmetz 2004: 4).³

Daycare centers were under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labor, which in 1977 became the Ministry of Labor and Welfare. In 2003, the handling of labor issues was shifted to the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, and this ministry continued to handle issues relating to daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care. The formal changes

² The full text of the law can be viewed at:

http://www.constitution.org.il/index.php?option=com_consti_comp&mytask=view&class=3&id=883

³ Fichtelberg-Barmetz, Osnat (2004). Arrangements for caring for young children, ITL Ministry report.

also attest to a perceptual shift from an approach that views daycare centers as a service mostly designed for weak population groups to one that perceives daycare centers as a service for working population groups, and especially a means for encouraging women to join the workforce, even if they are mothers to young children. Maintaining the separation between daycare centers and preschools under two different ministries helps in preserving different conceptual approaches in respect to the role of each one of these educational frameworks. While the Ministry of Education views preschools as an important means for educating children and socializing them in line with the social values defined as most important – that is, the children are viewed as the main “customer” – the “customers” of daycare centers, by virtue of them being under the responsibility of the ITL Ministry, are the parents. Hence, this approach views the service offered by daycare centers as a sort of babysitting service provided to the parents. This dictates the work method of daycares, the level of contents and the staff’s level of training. At the same time, the organizations that operate daycare centers and that are subject to the ITL Ministry’s standards view their own role in a broader manner.

The division of responsibilities between the ITL Ministry and Ministry of Education according to the age of children is problematic in three main respects:

- a) **The absence of an educational conceptual continuum:** There is no conceptual educational continuum for children that examines the desired development from birth until their departure from the education system. Even though the Ministry of Education seemingly holds the responsibility for the entire continuum of education, the fact that daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care are under the responsibility of another ministry is problematic. The split between the two systems is manifested through variations in the level of supervision, costs, contents, and the professional level of training. A new government bill – the Law for Supervising Daycare Centers for Toddlers, 2010⁴ - is meant to facilitate a revolution in the daycare field. This bill, which has already passed a first reading in the Israeli Knesset (the legislative branch of government), refers to, among

⁴ The full text of the bill can be viewed at:
<http://www.psychology.org.il/uploads/content/yeled2010-12-15.pdf>

other things, the educational-caretaking content at daycare centers and the necessity for full coordination between ministries on issues of content for the purpose of creating an educational continuum (Clause 10, Sub-Clause 3 in the bill). However, this is still not an educational continuum that would come under the responsibility of only one ministry – the Ministry of Education.

b) Difficulty in early detection of educational and learning problems. The ITL Ministry is indeed responsible for the 0-3 age group, yet in practice the daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care under ITL supervision are merely a part of the overall education system that serves children in these ages, with many of the educational institutions being private. Parallel to the problem of the absence of an educational continuum, the fact that children enter the formal education system only at age 3 or 4 and at times only at the age of 5 sometimes makes it harder to identify children with learning difficulties in order to address them at a young age. The fact that there is no single body that is responsible for the education of children and examination of their proper development starting at birth is problematic and may cause some children and issues to fall between the cracks. The Law for Supervising Daycare Centers for Toddlers, in the event that it passes, may partially regulate the issue, as it will apply to all the educational frameworks for children aged 0-3 that cater to at least seven children. That is, the law will also apply to the private frameworks (not including the pre-nursery home-care with up to six children). All frameworks will be required to undergo an ITL Ministry licensing process and operate under its supervision. Several problems prevent the legislation from resolving the difficulty. First, it does not apply to pre-nursery home-care, which are a significant part of the educational-caretaking frameworks for children in these ages. Second, the law may indeed regulate an issue which at this time is not sufficiently regulated, yet should preschools that do not conform to the standards be removed from Israel's preschool pool, and should there be no regularization of the construction issue that would enable the rapid construction of preschools that conform to the new standards, there could be a serious shortage of suitable building and frameworks for this age group. This could result in private preschools significantly raising their tuition fees as a result of the cost incurred by

the requirements of the new law (Sikuler 2011)⁵ and the possibility of monitoring prices should be considered. Third, private preschools that cater to children who are both below and above the age of 3 will be supervised by two different ministries – the Ministry of Education and the ITL Ministry – a fact that may produce contradictory demands from the preschools. Fourth, the fact that the ITL Ministry will be responsible for the licensing and supervision perpetuates the division of responsibility between the two ministries and does nothing to alleviate this issue.

- c) The problematic nature of qualifying early childhood teachers:** The Ariav model that prompted a reform in institutions for qualifying early childhood education teachers redefined “early childhood” as the 0-6 age group, as is logical to do in light of the fact that the preschool education branch is responsible for this entire age range. The change creates a difficulty in the practical training of students at teachers’ colleges because the institutions are now required to coordinate and cooperate with two government ministries. Practical training in Ministry of Education preschools is undertaken based on structured cooperation; this is not the case, though, *vis-à-vis* the ITL Ministry, where the relationship between the colleges and daycare centers and Ministry have not yet been formalized. Qualification is required at recognized institutions only, yet at this time it is difficult to identify enough daycare centers or supervised private preschools that are willing and able to take in students who seek to gain experience. In the Arab sector this is particularly difficult, as there are very few daycare centers and no formal institutionalization of the education of children under the age of 3.

⁵ Sikuler, Naama (2011). “You have another child in preschool? Prepare another 1,000 shekels per month,” Calcalist, July 27, 2011. To read the full story see the following link: <http://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3525816,00.html>

A. The education system for children aged 0-3

This system is being operated by two main groups: (a) private frameworks; (b) daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care operating under the ITL Ministry's supervision. There are frameworks that are somewhere in between the private and public, that is, frameworks operated by non-profit groups or organizations that belong to the Third Sector, yet operate as private frameworks and therefore are not bound by ITL Ministry regulations. These frameworks usually offer better conditions but at a higher cost. For example, this is how the preschools run by the "Smart Beginning" organization of The Israel Association of Community Centers operate.

A.1. Private preschools

We placed the issue of private preschools under the sub-chapter pertaining to the education system for children aged 0-3, because most of the children in this framework are in this group, yet in practice there are preschools that also accommodate children aged 3-4. In 2009, according to Central Bureau of Statistics figures, private preschools were attended by 16,800 children aged 3 and by 6,300 children aged 4.

Not many figures are available regarding private frameworks in terms of the number of frameworks, their distribution nationwide, the number of children who study there, the manpower employed by them and their financial turnover. However, according to estimates a high rate of children aged 0-3 are in private frameworks. In places where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply, private frameworks also serve some of the children aged 3-4. Although we are dealing with a significant share of the education system for ages 0-3 in Israel and with a part, even if small, of the education system for children aged 3-4, this is unregulated, operating under market forces and according to demand and supply. At this time, a private preschool is not classified as a business in need of a permit or a special business license (that is, preschools do not need to declare themselves as educational frameworks, and only need to fulfill the registration process as a registered/small business or company). At this time, anyone can open a preschool, without being required to show qualifications and without the preschool facility adhering to some kind of standard. Three private preschool organizations operate in Israel: The

Preschool Organization, The Preschool Association, and the Preschool Union. The role assumed by these organizations is to support preschools and their teachers and to provide them with an organizational framework; these organizations do not provide professional supervision and membership in them says nothing about the preschool or teacher quality.

The State addressed the issue of private preschools through several laws, yet none of them is efficient in the face of the many private frameworks. The law for supervising daycare centers, which is under the ITL Ministry's responsibility, does not address frameworks that did not acquire a license to operate as a daycare center through the Ministry. Hence, a private framework that does not wish to be recognized as a daycare center is not required to be under the ITL Ministry's supervision. The law for supervision of schools (including preschools) requires supervision of any framework with more than ten children, yet it only applies to children above the age of 3. In practice, the law is almost never enforced, unless the private preschool itself sought a Ministry license. The Ministry of Education is also limited in the number of supervisors at its disposal and they work first and foremost with official municipal preschools. At this time, most private frameworks do not report to the Ministry of Education or circumvent the law by operating frameworks for up to nine children. Based on Ministry of Education figures, only 239 private preschools are in fact registered by the Ministry nationwide. The new government bill – Supervision of Daycare Centers for Toddlers, 2010 – proposes licensing and supervision of any framework for children under the age of 3 caring for seven children or more. The provision of a license and supervision would be under the responsibility of the ITL Ministry while coordinating the educational-caretaking contents with the Ministry of Education. This bill has its own limits as well, as noted previously.

Why are so few private preschools for children older than 3 registered at the Ministry of Education? The answer for it may be provided by Meirav Arlozorov's article in The Marker from June 1, 2011.⁶ Arlozorov writes that "the teachers at private preschools have become criminals, as they refrain from undertaking the impossible process of receiving a legal license for their preschool – a permit for "exceptional use" under the Planning and

⁶ Arlozorov, Meirav (2011 a). "60% of business owners are criminals – with good reason," The Marker, June 1, 2011.

Construction Law. The process of granting of a permit for exceptional use lasts between a year and two years, costs the preschool teacher hundreds of thousands of shekels, and does not insure the granting of a permit at the end of the process. However, there is a high risk of being slapped with a lawsuit from the neighbors (over declining home values) or from city hall (over development fees). Moreover, the teacher is forbidden by law from operating the preschool as long as he or she is in the process of acquiring a permit – that is, the preschool teacher is supposed to pay rent for two years as well as all the costs involved in acquiring the license without being able to work for a living throughout this period. Given these draconian terms, it is no wonder that the overwhelming majority of private preschools in Israel simply refrain from acquiring a license by law and operate secretly, without a permit and with no supervision. They despair of securing a business license by law and therefore operate their business without receiving a business license from the local authority. Notably, these are businesses who report to the Income Tax Authority in line with the law – they only refrain from reporting to the local authority.” (Arlozorov 2011 a)

Why do parents choose the option of an unsupervised private preschool whose cost may reach up to NIS 3,000 a month in some well-to-do areas?⁷ They do it for several reasons: the most significant reason why parents may choose the option of a private preschool is the absence of any other choice. On many occasions, even though parents prefer to send their children to a municipal preschool if they are over the age of 3, or to a daycare center if they are under the age of 3, lack of space in these frameworks pushes these parents into the private market for lack of any other choice. In another article in *The Marker*, from May 26, 2011, Arlozorov addresses this issue.⁸ “Meital Lehavi, Tel-Aviv’s deputy mayor and the official in charge of city kindergartens [...] intends to open another eleven municipal preschools in Tel-Aviv ahead of the next school year. This is an insignificant number that mocks the scope of demand in the city: some 1,000 children, most of them

⁷ In poorer areas, the prices are lower and we can assume that they range between NIS 1,600-2,500. This price range and the reasons why parents choose private preschools are true with respect to the Jewish public. The cost of these frameworks is lower than the price charged by local authority preschools and this is their appeal. The cheaper price is reflected in the service provided. Based on the interviews we can say that very few private frameworks exist in the Arab sector.

⁸ Arlozorov, Meirav (2011 b). "Kindergarten teacher – a profession for criminals only", *The Marker*, May 26, 2011.

aged 3-4, were rejected by the city for lack of space in municipal preschools next year. Another 1,000 children who sought to be accepted by recognized preschools run by WIZO and *Na'amat* are expected to receive in the coming days a similar rejection notice. That is, some 2,000 children in Tel-Aviv alone will not be accommodated by municipal or recognized preschools and will have to join private preschools. However, the private preschools would have trouble offering a solution as well, given the fact that virtually all of them are fighting for their existence. Lehavi reports that 18 private preschools in the city are about to be closed after their owners were slapped with criminal indictments by the Tel-Aviv city hall (Arlozorov 2011 b).” The interviews we held indicate that Tel-Aviv is not the only city where a shortage is felt in municipal pre-compulsory preschools and is certainly not the only city facing a daycare center shortage.

There are other reasons why parents choose private frameworks: for very young children, some parents prefer a smaller framework with more limited exposure to childhood illnesses and where their child will enjoy personal attention. Parents may also find it important to see a small number of children at the preschool and a lower child-caretaker ratio. In this respect, private frameworks offer better conditions than the pre-nursery home-care and daycare centers under the ITL Ministry’s supervision. Other considerations such as proximity to home, avoidance of the social integration of municipal daycare centers and schools, flexible hours and personal familiarity may also affect such a decision. With regard to older children, in locations where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply, well-to-do parents prefer to send their children to a smaller framework with a better child-caretaker ratio than what is usually offered by the preschools at daycare centers and municipal preschools, while choosing to postpone the child’s entry into the municipal kindergarten system. The convenient hours of operation, the fact that such preschools offer a continuous school day that ends at 4 PM and sometimes later, and the few vacations are also significant reasons. Yet another consideration is the price. In locations where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply, the cost of a school day at a pre-compulsory preschool and the cost of an afternoon pre-nursery home-care may combine for a total of NIS 1,500 – 1,800, and this is true for preschools at daycare centers as well. This sum is on occasion only a few hundred

shekels lower than what one would pay at a private framework, and many parents are willing to pay it for a framework that offers better conditions.

A.2. ITL Ministry's daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care

As noted by the ITL Ministry's website, the development of daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care in the early 1970s stemmed from an orientation of encouraging women to join the workforce, to come up with a proper solution for placing the children at an educational-caretaking framework, and to develop daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care for children whose personal and emotional development was jeopardized by the functioning of their parents. Based on figures received by the ITL Ministry, the daycare center system includes today some 1,640 daycare centers and about 3,200 pre-nursery home-care that take in up to five children, nationally distributed among all population sectors. The demand for this service is gradually growing and the rise in the number of children ranges between three to four percent each year. The number of children who attend this system totals some 90,000 today.

A.2.1 Daycare centers

The largest chains operating daycare centers in Israel are as follows: women's groups – *Na'amat*, *WIZO*, *Emunah*, and the "Smart Beginning" chain of the Israel Association of Community Centers. In addition to these there are many other elements: ultra-Orthodox, Arab and other non-profit groups, local municipalities and community centers. The ITL Ministry grants a daycare center badge to any body that is a corporation: women's groups, non-profit organizations, a company or a local authority, on condition that they adhere to the regulations required by the Ministry. Daycare centers are under the responsibility of the ITL Ministry based on the concept that they will assist women in joining the workforce. At the same time, there is a preference to first take in children sent by the social services departments ("welfare children"), based on the perception that this is one of the ways to assist women in leaving the circle of welfare recipients and joining the workforce. Among working mothers ("children to working mothers"),

preference is also given to children with low-income earning parents.⁹ Some women's organizations also adhere to a social vision parallel to their activity to promote women's status in Israel. For that reason, it is important for them to accommodate welfare children via all sorts of projects, many times in cooperation with government ministers as well as other organizations and non-profit groups. These projects are designated for various sub-groups such as children at-risk (as a solution before removing a child from home), children with disabilities or children with communication problems. Despite the priority given to welfare children, most children attending daycare centers are "children of working mothers." There are several large employers, such as hospitals and universities, where daycare centers are being opened in cooperation with the employer for the benefit of the employees.

A.2.1.1 Planning

As more and more women are currently integrated into the workforce, the demand for daycare centers keeps growing. However, the current supply does not meet the growing demand and a notable shortage is apparent in proper frameworks. As daycare centers are not part of the Compulsory Education Law, there is no obligation to designate public areas for them. At the same time, all the organizations that operate daycare centers are undergoing a growth process and will be opening more facilities in the next school year than were opened this year. The organizations identify suitable facilities and shift them into daycare centers. They attempt to make use of every opportunity they encounter to identify new buildings. For its part, the ITL Ministry encourages this and earmarks considerable resources to that end.

Daycare centers usually feature at least three preschool classes operating under one roof. The ITL Ministry's standard determines the division of children into classes according to their age: infants (3-15 months), young toddlers (16-24 months), and older toddlers (25-36 months). The organizations that operate daycare centers may refer to the various age groups under different names and also define ages differently. The ITL Ministry's

⁹ The two lowest subsidy rankings, which grant parents the highest level of subsidy, are reserved for welfare children. The other rankings, 3-10, are designated for working children based on their parents' income.

standards also determine the size of classrooms and the child-caretaker ratio. In the infant class, the ratio is one caretaker for every six children, with a maximum of 15 infants per class; in the young toddler class the ratio is one caretaker for every nine children, with a maximum of 22 children per class; while in the older toddler class the ratio is one caretaker for every eleven children, with a maximum of 27 children per class. The Ministry allows for deviations from the standard in regulated daycare centers only, approving additional children in line with the following: up to three children for an infant class (18 overall), and up to five children for the young toddler class (27 overall) and for the older toddler class (32 overall). In case of additional children, the manpower standards are recalculated in line with the age of the children added to the class. The ability to deviate from the standard allows every organization to set its own standard for children per class, yet unless the deviations are improving the basic standards of the ITL Ministry, they are forbidden. Despite the standard, which is a matter of principle, this may change from one daycare center to another, based on the classroom's physical size and the age of the children (within the defined age range). Every daycare center employs a director, whose office is at the center, and he or she supervises all activities, guides the staff and is responsible for all administrative matters, *vis-à-vis* the parents and *vis-à-vis* the organization. In addition, every daycare center features a kitchen, and a cook prepares meals there every day. Some of the organizations strengthen the staff beyond the required standard. The reinforcement is undertaken, for example, by extending the scope of the director's position, by providing a higher standard for the cook, by reinforcing the caretaking staff during problematic periods or at centers contending with special problems, and by manning the staff beyond the ratio required by the ITL Ministry. This type of organizational strengthening is made possible because some of these organizations have external budgetary sources from independent fundraising, which they can designate for this purpose. The centers' hours of operation are 7 AM to 4 PM on weekdays and 7 AM to 1 PM on Fridays. The daycare centers operate from September 1st to August 8th and follow a uniform vacation timetable in line with Israel's holidays.

In each of the large organizations operating daycare centers there is also a certain number of "multipurpose centers." These daycare centers operate from 7 AM to 7 PM. Half of these children in attendance are "working children" and half are "welfare children." After

4 PM, only the welfare children remain for extended care. At 1:30 PM, older children (up to 6-years-old) also arrive at the center for afternoon care.

These organizations have three funding sources: (1) parental fees and complementary State participation (via the ITL Ministry or the Welfare Ministry); (2) project partnerships with non-profit groups and other organizations; (3) external fundraising via donations.

A.2.1.2 Costs

Daycare centers are subsidized by the ITL Ministry. This means that rates are set – a different fee for infants and for toddlers – as well as various discounted rates. Parents entitled to a discount pay less, with the difference being subsidized by the ITL Ministry with the subsidy paid directly to the daycare organization. The parents pay for twelve full months, even though in August the center only operates until the 8th of the month. However, as in August the parents are sometimes required to fund summer camps at the daycare center or elsewhere, the regular August payment is spread out over the year to ease the financial burden on the parents. The full monthly cost during the 2010/2011 school year, without discounts, for a long school day was NIS 2,169 per infant and NIS 1,653 per toddler. As noted, the sum includes payment for August and is paid in eleven installments.

The parents pay the organization that operates the daycare center while the discount level is determined by the ITL Ministry, according to a calculation of the per capita income per family. There are many criteria for a discount and discounts are granted to parents in a variety of cases, including the following: working mothers (preference to the mother working full-time), parents who study, new immigrants, returning citizens, single mothers, parents with several children in the system, and unemployed parents. At the same time, the entitlement level is determined according to the per capita means test as well.¹⁰ In recent years, the ITL Ministry is attempting to increase transparency and publishes the criteria for discounts in a way that enables parents to find out their entitlement level. Requests may also be made online. Despite the ITL Ministry's growing

¹⁰ The exact criteria for discounts may be viewed at:
<http://www.tamas.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/FA9757CE-1C42-416E-BF93-204068DED3CC/0/5772.pdf>

efficiency, not all is rosy: for example, in the 2010-2011 school year the ITL Ministry published the entitlement levels late in the year. Some organizations granted mid-level discount rankings to parents in advance of ITL Ministry approval so as not to burden parents who were entitled to discounts. However, there were many mismatches between the temporary rankings and the final rankings as approved by the ITL Ministry causing a number of problems.

In addition to the regular monthly cost, some of the organizations offer services to parents for an additional fee – like schools. This is done in the framework of ITL Ministry regulations and is called “deviation from the service basket.”¹¹ These services include, extending the school day beyond 4 PM; extending the school year with summer camps; a meat supplement; reinforced manpower standards; security services; and so on. These services are sometimes offered as optional services only to the parents interested in them. This is true, for example, with respect to the extension of the school day or school year. However, when offering a universal service, all parents must agree to it. The center can offer parents a service package tailored to the needs of the center in question and charge – independently and not through the organization – some NIS 80-350 on top of the basic cost of the center. This phenomenon is very prevalent at centers located at workplaces, where the package is created at the employer’s request, which sometimes also subsidizes some or all of the cost. On July 1, 2011, an article on this issue was published in the local Jerusalem paper *Kol Ha’Ir*.¹² The article noted that a daycare center in Jerusalem asked the parents for an additional payment of NIS 340 per month for the upcoming school year, 2011/2012, and added that those who cannot afford it would be able to send their children to another preschool class at the center, requiring an additional payment of only NIS 140 per month. For their part, parents were infuriated at the class being divided along socioeconomic lines and the creation of “second class children” (Simany-Bardugo 2011).

¹¹ See the ITL Ministry's instructions on deviation from the services basket in the 2010/2011 school year at: <http://www.tamas.gov.il/NR/exeres/760CE4FF-C581-42B3-888F-8BFF717876D1.htm>

¹² Simany-Bardugo, Michal (2011). “Pushing poor children to a separate framework”, *Kol Ha’Ir* Jerusalem, July 1, 2011.

A.2.1.3 Preschools for children aged 3-4

Only a small portion of the daycare centers run preschool classes for children aged 3-4, with a total of some 120-130 preschool classes across the whole of Israel. These are preschools that operate inside a daycare facility only at centers that feature at least four classrooms. These preschools operate similarly to official Ministry of Education preschools in some ways, yet in other ways they operate in a different manner – like the other classes at the center. The regulations regarding the child-staff ratio are that of the Ministry of Education: 35 children per class with a certified preschool teacher who is a Ministry of Education employee and an assistant who is, for all intents and purposes, a caretaker employed by the center. The preschool curriculum is that of the Ministry of Education and supervision is undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Education. However, the hours of operation at the preschool are the same as the other daycare classes, that is, until 4 or 5 PM. The caretaker-assistant remains at the preschool until the end of the day, while the preschool teacher finishes at 1:30 PM. As the preschool operates in the framework of the daycare center and the manpower is located at the site, some staff reinforcements are available at times. These classes too do not function exactly like municipal preschools, though: they accept children who are still in diapers, the children (and especially the younger ones) nap around midday, and full meals are cooked on site.

Based on information provided in interviews with ITL Ministry officials, in the past there were many more daycare centers that included a preschool class for children aged 3-4. The reason for this, they said, is that only towards the year 2000 did the Ministry of Education lower its age of responsibility from 4 to 3 and begin supervising all educational frameworks for children over 3. Until that time, the ITL Ministry was responsible for children aged 0-4. The agreements that the ITL Ministry reached with organizations operating daycare centers were that it would be possible to continue to run a preschool class only at centers that featured at least four classrooms, in order to continue to comply with the authority of the ITL Ministry – children aged 0-3. Hence, in case of uncertainty as to whether to open another infant class or a preschool class, the preference today would be to open an infant class. It is important to note that daycare

centers do not run preschool classes for children aged 3-4 at locations where the Compulsory Education Law applies, as there they would not be able to exact a fee from the parents. In terms of the costs, as the ITL Ministry is only in charge of children aged 0-3 and children who in September are older than 2 years and 8 months can officially go to municipal preschools, children older than that are not entitled to ITL Ministry subsidies and their parents pay the full price. Many parents are willing to pay regardless because the preschool class at daycare centers offers several significant advantages compared to municipal preschools.

A.2.1.4 Supervision and instruction

The ITL Ministry supervises daycare centers by virtue of The Law on Supervision of Daycare Centers, 1965¹³, which ensures that they meet professional criteria and standards, provide a high-quality level of service and maintain a high safety level. To that end, the daycare centers' staff undergoes advanced training and professional qualification and the center is subject to safety inspections for official recognition and to obtain a daycare center badge. The preschools at the centers are under the Ministry of Education's supervision while the kitchens at the center are under Ministry of Health supervision. The Ministry of Welfare supervises all issues pertaining to "welfare children."

Parallel to the general supervision of the ITL Ministry, the organizations that run the daycare centers, or at least the large ones, have an independent supervision establishment. At WIZO, for example, the supervision includes an administrative department and a pedagogical department. The administrative department is responsible for the management issues including manpower, nutrition, health, construction and renovation, and facility maintenance. The department also provides instruction to center directors, staff, and pedagogical inspectors. The pedagogical department sets the educational vision and guides the daycare centers on the educational front. The inspectors are also responsible for the pedagogical instruction at the centers. The inspectors maintain close ties with the centers under their responsibility (15-16 daycare centers per inspector) and arrive there once a month on average. The instruction sessions and advance training to

¹³ The full text of the law can be viewed at:
<http://www.tamas.gov.il/NR/exeres/5AA7CA24-CFC2-4EC2-B893-9E02960EF4E4.htm>

employees are offered by the pedagogical inspectors and by the administrative inspectors, but at times external professionals arrive as well, in line with need and community contexts. In addition, WIZO has three pedagogical centers that offer courses and advanced training, including a professional classification course for caretakers held with ITL Ministry approval and cooperation.

The supervision system of *Emunah* operates in a similar manner: each supervisor is responsible for 15-16 daycare centers and visits them twice a month at least. The supervisors also serve as instructors for the caretaking staff and for the center's director. In addition, the organization provides advanced training. The "Smart Beginning" organization does not have supervision, per se, but rather, offers guidance and instruction. The regional guides and pedagogical instructors arrive at centers nationwide in order to guide and instruct the educational staff and even the parents, in line with the principles and values that constitute the organization's educational worldview. The guide monitors the preschools in terms of hygiene, menu, the ratio between children and staff, and so on. The guide arrives at each preschool once a month and maintains continuous ties with the pedagogical instructor responsible for the preschool in question. The pedagogical instructors arrive at each preschool for ten hours of instruction per month. The instruction program for each preschool is tailor-made based on its particular needs. In addition, occasional sessions of advanced training are provided to the educational staff. *Na'amat* also has a broad pedagogical supervision system that ensures proper administration and monitors the entire daycare center system.

A.2.1.5 The training of staff

As noted, the ITL Ministry demands that the entire caretaking staff at daycare centers undergo professional training. Most caretakers at the centers hold the ITL Ministry's Classification Level 1 and some have Classification Level 2, which is the highest. As set by the professional qualification branch at the ITL Ministry, the training of caretakers (just like the training of employees in many other professions) is undertaken via two tracks. The first track is for job seekers and consists of day studies in intense courses offered at one of the ITL Ministry's four training centers in Israel, with the Ministry responsible for the contents and teaching staff and issuing the professional diploma. The

second track is qualification and advanced training through night studies at independent schools. In this case, educational institutions that wish to offer a caretaker course on their own, including the large organizations that operate daycare centers, seek the ITL Ministry's approval of their curriculum and teaching staff. At the end of the course, the professional qualification branch is the one to issue the certification.

In order to be accepted for a course and/or for work at a center, the employee in question does not need to have completed 12 years of study. Those hired for work without training are encouraged to pass an on-the-job training course. On many occasions the courses are subsidized and are held in the afternoon and evening hours. Some organizations require the employees to complete the course by the end of the first year on the job. The extent of the course and number of hours of study change from one place to another yet it usually runs for up to a year and a half. The course includes theoretical contents and practical work at the daycare center. Those who take part in the course as employees (that is, not through the job seeker track) can do it at the training centers of the organizations that run daycares or at various colleges nationwide granted ITL Ministry approval. The work license is conditional and contingent on passing two ITL Ministry exams – one practical and one theoretical. Those who took the Level 1 early childhood caretaker course can go on to Level 2 caretaking studies.

The level of education required of daycare center directors changes from one organization to the next. The education level of Center directors varies from high school graduates without further degrees to those with a BA or even an MA in an education-related field. Some organizations provide directors with special training during work, usually within the first two years. In addition, the ITL Ministry requires them to undergo the Ministry's Daycare Center Director Course.

The salary of caretakers is rather low and is determined through negotiations between the caretakers' union and the organization and its management. There is no national union of caretakers and there are also no overarching regulations regarding the salary of caretakers, whose wages are lower than those paid to assistants working at municipal preschools. At the same time, caretaker wages are determined in line with the limits set by the State's labor laws. The salary of preschool teachers employed at preschools at

daycare centers is set by the Ministry of Education, as they are Ministry employees. However, these teachers are not considered preschool managers, because they have a daycare center director above them. Hence, they are not entitled to the management component of the salary, and as a result their wages are somewhat lower than the salaries of preschool teachers who work at local authorities. Nevertheless, their wages are higher than those of caretakers at daycare centers.

A new report issued by the ITL Ministry in January of 2011 – a study prepared by an advisory committee headed by Professor Miriam (Miki) Rosenthal from Hebrew University titled “Standards for Operating Educational Frameworks for Toddlers” – redefines the training and experience requirements for staff members at daycare centers and pre-nursery home-care. According to the new standards, staff members – the daycare center director, senior educator, educator, cook, educational instructor, pre-nursery home-care manager and pre-nursery home-care coordinator – would be required to have education and qualification levels that are much higher than the current requirements. However, it is unlikely that the report will be fully implemented in the coming years.

A.2.1.6 Contents

In the past, the Ministry of Education issued guidelines for work with young children aged 2 and above, and some daycare centers operate in line with these guidelines. The new standards issued by the ITL Ministry in its January 2011 report greatly improve the existing situation in many aspects: physical environment, structure and equipment; size of group and matching of the number of children to the number of early childhood educators; educational-caretaking work at frameworks for toddlers; and safety management. The report sets clear and detailed standards regarding the educational-caretaking program. The new bill – Supervision of Daycare Centers for Toddlers – also refers to the issue of educational-caretaking contents and asserts, as noted, that these will be determined in coordination with the Ministry of Education, in order to create an educational continuum between the daycare centers and kindergartens. Generally speaking, the contents currently being taught at daycare centers are determined through cooperation between the supervision and instruction staff and the staff and directors at the daycare centers themselves. The contents are adapted to the children’s needs, their age

and their developmental level. Work with infants is, of course, mostly confined to caretaking and also includes advancement in the areas of motor, social, language and comprehension skills.

A.2.2 Pre-nursery home-care supervised by the ITL Ministry

The first pre-nursery home-care service was established at the end of the 1970s, in an attempt to develop an alternative to the daycare center service that would be more suitable to the developmental needs of infants and toddlers. A pre-nursery home-care unit is an organized preschool framework with caretakers who provide, at their homes, caretaking services to children. The caretakers at pre-nursery home-care are subject to professional supervision and are offered systematic instruction by the coordinator of the pre-nursery home-care unit. Pre-nursery home-care is thereby distinguished from the caretaking services provided by a private nanny who cares for several children at her home (Fichterberg-Barmetz 2004: 4)¹⁴.

Pre-nursery home-care is characterized as a caretaking-educational framework for a group of five children from the age of six months to the age of 3 years. The pre-nursery home-care operates in the home of the caretaker under the supervision and guidance of the pre-nursery home-care coordinator. The home-care is run through the Social Services Department of the local authority or through private franchises who were given a “pre-nursery home-care badge” by the ITL Ministry. They can operate six days a week: Sunday through Thursday between 7 AM and 4 PM and Fridays or on the eve of holidays between 7 AM and 12 PM. Or they can operate five days a week: Sunday through Thursday between 7 AM and 4:30 PM, or 7:30 AM to 5 PM. In many ways, the regulations for pre-nursery home-care are identical to those of daycare centers: the vacation timetable, the determination of subsidy entitlement rates, and the qualifications required of the home-care’s manager (similar to caretakers).

The home-care supervised by the ITL Ministry are a service that began in the early 1990s on the initiative of the Jerusalem Municipality, against a backdrop of distress and a shortage of daycare centers. In accordance with ITL Ministry instructions, a local

¹⁴ Fichtelberg-Barmetz, Osnat (2004). Arrangements for caring for young children, an ITL Ministry report.

authority interested in opening a pre-nursery home-care system under the ITL Ministry's supervision should approach the Ministry to be granted recognition. Such recognition is granted during a session of a special steering committee initiated by the local authority. The committee examines whether there is room for recommending to the branch management the opening or extension of the pre-nursery home-care system in the community. A local authority that receives recognition from the Ministry must employ a coordinator for every 28 home-cares and must verify the home-care managers' adherence to all the required conditions for receiving a pre-nursery home-care badge from the ITL Ministry (physical conditions at the apartment, qualification of the home-care manager). As the home-care operates at the home of its manager, the coordinator must visit the home and meet with the manager's family members, the husband and children, in order to verify personally their suitability for the school's environment. The coordinator convenes the steering committee and summons for an interview the home-care managers who meet all the requirements for receiving the pre-nursery home-care badge. The committee discusses all the requests and recommends the approval of managers who it finds suitable.

The roles of the home-care coordinator are to prepare for the opening of the school year at new or existing home-cares, arrange for contracts between the local authority and every manager who meets the criteria, approach the Social Services Department in the community in order to receive a badge from the Ministry of Welfare that would allow for the placement of children at risk to be directed to the home-care by the department, instruct pre-nursery home-care managers, perform professional monitoring of their work and of the system's financial administration, take in and place children at the home-cares and address parental inquiries. At this time, the coordinator is required to hold a BA in early childhood education or a post-BA early childhood specialization in similar areas, or to be a graduate of the Schwartz Program. The coordinator must also have two years of experience in individual and group instruction in early childhood educational frameworks. The coordinator is a local authority employee and the ITL Ministry covers the employment cost.

A.2.3 Afternoon childcare facilities

In 2007, the ITL Ministry started to address the issue of afternoon childcare facilities for children aged 3-10 and announced that it would begin to grant official approval to afternoon childcare facilities that meet the recognition procedure's requirements. Facilities that receive approval can take in the children of working parents who meet the qualifications and receive subsidies from Ministry subsidies for them. The plan's aim, as characterized by then-ITL Minister Eli Yishai, was to "remove one of the main obstacles to the integration of mothers into the workforce. This way, many mothers would be able to extend the extent of their working, join a stable workplace full-time and for the long term, and by doing so boost the earning potential of their family." The plan's implementation began in the 2007/2008 school year and included only 4,000 children. In the 2010/2011 school year, some 20,000 children took part in it, and in the next two years the program will grow to include some 60,000 children. Not every community is entitled to this recognition procedure. The plan was launched in communities that are part of clusters 1-4 in the socioeconomic ranking and later was extended to communities classified as up to cluster 7. The procedure for recognizing afternoon childcare facilities refers to every such facility of at least five children that meets the procedure's criteria. Every recognized afternoon childcare is publicized on the ITL Ministry's website, at the employment offices and at local authorities, so that entitled working parents (according to criteria) would be able to send their child to a recognized facility and pay a subsidized price.¹⁵

A.2.4 Problems in the education system for children aged 0-3

(1) There is no supervisory and planning body that takes the entire system into consideration, from birth to age 6. Too many bodies are involved in this work: The ITL Ministry, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, local authorities and various organizations. The absence of one guiding professional entity that addresses all the issues pertaining to the education of children aged 0-6 is especially felt at the young age groups, 0-3. The common perception among the people interviewed in this survey was that the

¹⁵ More information about the subject is available at:
<http://www.tamas.gov.il/CmsTamat/Rsrc/Tzaharonim/Tzaharonim.html>

Ministry of Education should have assumed the overall responsibility for early childhood, ages 0-6. This move is being avoided for the time being because of political reasons such as prestige and power struggles between the various ministries, and also because of budgetary reasons, as the assumption of responsibility would require the designation of funds.

(2) In the absence of legislation that regulates the designation of public land for building daycare centers, not even in new neighborhoods, a severe shortage of centers has been created. As opposed to preschools, and especially compulsory kindergartens, where the local authority is responsible for designating public land for the sake of building them, in the case of daycare centers no such responsibility is imposed on the local authority. Organizations that run daycare centers must win a tender for public land, while competing against each other.¹⁶ As opposed to preschools, where only few agencies engage in funding, approving, planning and establishing them, in the case of daycare centers many more agents are involved in their establishment, a fact that necessarily complicates the process.¹⁷ The shortage in daycare centers, and the fact that demand is higher than supply, allows the private preschool, which are not supervised, to charge very high prices. The means for regulating the activity of private frameworks are problematic and inefficient in many ways, and in general are impossible without budgets for the supervision. Another problem is that adapting private preschools to the demands required by the new bill would be expensive – a cost they currently threaten to shift to the parents by raising the tuition fees considerably, up to NIS 3,500 per month (Sikuler 2011).¹⁸

(3) Very few daycare centers and pre-nursery home-cares, as well as private frameworks, operate in the Arab sector. This means that a mother to a child under the age of 3 – and in locations where the Compulsory Education Law is not yet enforced above the age of 3 –

¹⁶ According to protocol 194 of the State Control Committee, March 10, 2008.

¹⁷ According to a planning guide for integrating public, commercial, office and residential buildings released in January 2011 following joint research by the Ministry of Housing and Construction, Ministry of the Interior and the Israel Land Administration, the difference between preschools and daycare centers is as follows: preschools depend on the local authority for funding, approval, planning and construction. On the other hand, daycare centers need the local authority and Ministry of Housing and Construction on issues of funding, approval, planning and construction; the ITL Ministry for funding and approval; the Ministry of Health for approval; the Israel Lottery Corporation for funding; and private entrepreneurs for funding, planning and construction.

¹⁸ See footnote 5.

who wishes to join the workforce, would encounter considerable difficulty in doing so. This also stems from the absence of demand, as a shortage of jobs and social and cultural reasons prevent women in the Arab and Bedouin sector from joining the workforce, and especially working outside their communities.

(4) At this time, the education and qualification level of the staff at daycare centers and pre-nursery home-cares under ITL Ministry supervision is much lower than that of the educational staff at Ministry of Education preschools. Similarly, their wages are lower than the salaries of kindergarten assistants and they work longer hours. The Ariav model that formulated the reform in Israel's teacher qualification institutions (which we shall expand on in Chapter 4) ruled that the gap in qualification levels between those who work with children aged 0-3 and those who work with children aged 3-6 is unacceptable and that workers should be trained for the entire 0-6 age range. However, as long as the ITL Ministry is responsible for daycare centers and pre-nursery home-cares, it can determine the level of qualification required of its employees. The advisory committee report headed by Professor Rosenthal, should it be implemented, is supposed to greatly improve the situation.

The shortage in daycare centers pertains to the fact that there is no mandatory education for these age groups, and therefore the State is not obligated to provide the service. As the State is not required to do so, the issue is apparently also not a top priority. Had the Ministry of Education assumed full responsibility, by law, for the entire 0-6 age range, and been given the required budgets, things would clearly be different. At the same time, even under the current state of affairs, with daycare centers under the ITL Ministry's responsibility, there are ways to require the designation of public land for daycare centers and pre-nursery home-cares and ensure they are built. One way to do this is through legislation or new planning regulations that would require that public land be set aside to these needs. The attempt to legislate the regulation of the issue of private preschools, without making sure that alternate preschools meeting the new standards are built or that prices are regulated, would necessarily prompt the closing of some preschools and a significant rise in tuition fees paid by parents. Such a move would be irresponsible.

B. The education system for children aged 3-6

B.1. Ministry of Education and local authorities

As noted, compulsory free education for children from the age of 3 went into effect a long time ago. However, the process of implementing it is rather slow. Although the order is not applied nationwide, the Ministry of Education is still responsible for all children in terms of supervision, as defined by the Law on Supervision of Schools, 1969.¹⁹ In locations where the Compulsory Education Law from age 3 does not apply, the Ministry of Education is not required to fund the opening of preschools to children aged 3-4. In some cases, the Ministry of Education funded the construction of preschools in peripheral areas or in national priority areas, yet this is not a matter of orderly policy. Although the Ministry is not responsible for building preschools and running them in locations where the law does not apply, a mechanism of phased tuition fees and discounts is nonetheless offered to the parents of children aged 3-4. We should note that this is, in fact, a rather minor subsidy: the local authority, rather than the Ministry of Education, bears 25 percent of the cost.²⁰

Several problems persist in respect to the education of children aged 3-4:

- (1) In locations where the law does not yet apply, the local authority does not always want or is not always capable of investing in frameworks for children aged 3-4. On occasion this also stems from the parents' inability to pay the tuition fee, despite the existing discount policy.
- (2) Even when the local authority wishes to provide education to children aged 3-4, it is not necessarily able to meet the real growth rate and open enough new frameworks in a timely fashion. In such cases, the authority would always prefer to care for compulsory kindergarten children, as required by law, as opposed to pre-compulsory kindergarten children.

¹⁹ The full text of the law could be viewed at: http://www.nevo.co.il/law_html/law01/152_036.htm

²⁰ The discount criteria and criteria rates can be viewed at: http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/MinhalPedagogi/Agafim/Irgun/Ganim2010_2011.htm

- (3) A serious shortage of infrastructure, even in locations where the law applies, makes it difficult to fully implement the law. This problem is particularly noteworthy in the Arab and Bedouin sectors. At the same time, when no orderly preschool buildings are available, a solution is sometimes found in the form of mobile homes or the leasing of existing buildings. Such solutions, and especially the option of rented apartments, are not necessarily terrible, as shown by Blass in his study of the education system in the Bedouin sector (Blass 2006: 14-18).²¹

B.1.1. Planning

As noted, the Compulsory Education Law applies at this time to 151 communities, in a partial or full manner, from the ages of 3 or 4 only. Some communities were removed from the list in the wake of a High Court of Justice ruling from February 2006 following a petition by the *Adalah* legal center. *Adalah* argued that the designation of national priority areas is not undertaken based on clear criteria and that there must be clear, socioeconomic criteria. The government's decision to declare a community as a national priority A or B grants it significant economic benefits in many areas: education, housing, employment, economics, and welfare. In 2006, the High Court ruled that the government decision which defined national priority areas and granted them education benefits is discriminatory and illegal and that it shall be rescinded within a year. The High Court also ruled that the decision on which communities shall be declared as national priority areas is by law in the hands of the Knesset rather than the government. The implication of the ruling was that the list should include communities that based on socioeconomic criteria and many Arab and Druze communities that were not previously on the list should be added to it. The judges also ruled that the benefits granted to national priority areas must be legislated and not be undertaken based on a policy lacking clear criteria.²² The Court granted the State a period of one year to implement its decision. However, at the end of this period, the State asked for an extension of the implementation period. Finally, the court ordered the extension of this period until September 1st, 2009. One of

²¹ Blass, Nachum (2006). Construction needs survey at permanent Bedouin communities in the Negev, presented to the Daroma – Idan HaNegev non-profit organization.

²² High Court of Justice Case 11163/03 – the Higher Monitoring Committee for Arab Affairs in Israel and others against the prime Minister of Israel, from February 27, 2006.

the implications of the Court ruling is that the Ministry of Education participates in the tuition fees of children aged 3-4 in Druze sector preschools and also in communities where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply. The proclivity to complete the law's application in all communities in cluster 3 of the socioeconomic categorization would greatly improve the situation in the Arab sector. And so, in the coming school year, 2011/2012, five additional Arab communities will also receive these benefits. For the Arab communities this is significant in several ways. First, in many cases it means that new preschools for children aged 3-4 will be opened in their community. Second, although communities in the lowest clusters of the socioeconomic cluster are home to many parents who seemingly meet the criteria for discounts, in practice many of them have trouble proving their entitlement because they cannot present orderly salary slips. This has meant that before the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law, many of these parents preferred not to send their children to the local authority's official preschools, choosing cheaper options such as private preschools (which in the Arab sector are a cheaper option than a local authority preschool), preschools run by non-profit groups, including religious-Islamic groups, or the other option of keeping the child at home. Once registration to a local authority preschool is free, the parents prefer it over the other options. Third, there is great significance to the children entering the official education system, which is supervised, at an early age and having their development reviewed by professionals. A delayed or late entry into the education system, as often happens in the Arab sector, leads to greater educational gaps between children.

In locations where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply, pre-compulsory kindergarten children (aged 3-4) are defined as entitled for registration, while compulsory kindergarten age children (aged 5) are defined as registration-required. This means that the State does not require children entitled to register to enter a preschool and is also not legally obligated to them in the same manner as it is for compulsory kindergarten children. Local authorities, thus, can also postpone registration to preschool if there is no room there, or for other reasons. In places where the law is not yet applicable, the State is also not obligated to provide children aged 3-4 with services granted to kindergarten children, such as the services of a school psychologist and medical assistants. At this age, these services are provided to children only if funded by the local authority or by the

parents. When the Compulsory Education Law applies to certain neighborhoods or streets based on their inclusion in the neighborhood rehabilitation program, while the city as a whole is not qualified – tuition is free but the parents are under no obligation to enroll them in any framework. Despite the legal and formal difference between compulsory kindergarten children and pre-compulsory preschool children, some local authorities feel greatly committed to pre-compulsory preschool children as well.

At the same time, some local authorities are having trouble meeting the rate of growth and making sure that enough preschools are available in line with need and demand. As was noted earlier with regard to daycare centers, one of the problems has to do with identifying suitable buildings for preschools or the planning and construction of new structures. In the absence of readily available public land, solutions are sometimes found in the form of leasing existing structures temporarily or utilizing mobile structures. The result on occasion is low-quality buildings that are unfit to be used as preschools. This happens in the large cities as well. When a shortage emerges in preschool classes, the first priority is always the needs of children in compulsory kindergarten and only then the needs of preschool children are addressed.

A preschool cluster is a format currently encouraged and being expanded by the Ministry of Education. It refers to four or more preschool classes, for children aged 3-6, all located in one space. The Ministry encourages it supplementing school hours and their inclusion in the “New Horizon” plan as well as by adding the post of cluster director. A preschool cluster is mostly viable in densely populated areas, because the preschools must be close to the children’s homes.

On the other hand, early childhood divisions are declining at this time, even if this is not an official Ministry of Education policy. These divisions are compulsory preschools in the framework of primary education that are being supervised by the preschool education branch. The early childhood divisions are especially prevalent in the Arab sector, where many compulsory kindergartens are located within primary schools. The conceptual guidelines currently endorsed by the Ministry of Education is that early childhood education is a significant and unique educational phase that is worthy of being addressed independent of schools. In the past, another approach was highly prevalent whereby

preschool education, and especially compulsory kindergarten, constituted an education system meant to prepare children for first grade. The Ministry of Education prefers that kindergartens be run independently, even if they are located within schools, and not receive orders from school principals. The Ministry wants kindergarten teachers to adhere to the preschool curriculum and take responsibility for managing the kindergarten. This is also important for the teachers, because independent management grants them an institutional badge and the status of manager, which is also reflected in their salaries.

B.1.2. Budgeting

Several important principles guide the budgeting of Israeli preschools:

- (1) Compulsory kindergartens (children aged 5): The Ministry of Education directly pays the salary of kindergarten teachers and transfers to the local authorities the wages of assistants, which are calculated according to an average of level six with ten years of seniority. The local authority bears the cost of operating the kindergarten. The authority also fully covers the cost of all the accompanying services such as the psychological service, advisors, regular supervisory officers, and other paramedical services.
- (2) Pre-compulsory preschool (children aged 3-4): At pre-compulsory preschools, both the preschool teacher and assistant are employees of the local authority and receive their wages from it. The calculation of the preschool's cost includes the salary of the teacher and assistant as well as all the costs that are not wages (the preschool operational costs). The teachers' wages are calculated according to an average of twelve years of seniority while the salaries of assistants are calculated according to level six with ten years of seniority. In locations where the Compulsory Education Law applies, the Ministry of Education covers 90 percent of the cost per child, while the local authority pays the remaining ten percent. Notably, in locations where the law applies, there is no difference for the parents between a child in compulsory kindergarten and a child in pre-compulsory preschool.

(3) There is a difference in preschool budgeting between local authorities and regional councils. In local authorities where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply, a phased tuition fee system is in place. The Ministry of Education covers 75 percent of the discount and the local authority bears the remaining 25 percent of the cost. In regional councils, on the other hand, the calculation is undertaken per preschool and not per child. The Ministry of Education covers 85 percent of the cost of running a compulsory kindergarten in the community (and if several compulsory kindergartens are available, all of them will be subsidized by 85 percent). Compulsory kindergarten is defined as a kindergarten that takes in at least eleven children with at least one of them being of compulsory kindergarten age. The Ministry covers ten percent of the cost of running a second preschool for children aged 3-4 in such a community. In a compulsory kindergarten the teacher is an employee of the State, while at pre-compulsory preschool, just like in local authorities, the teacher is a regional council employee. The implication of budgeting per preschool and not per child is that regional councils do not utilize a phased tuition fee scheme based on the income of parents, and parents are not entitled to discounts. The remainder of the cost, beyond the Ministry of Education's participation, is borne by the parents of children aged 3-4. The Ministry of Education's rationale for this decision is that if a community has only eleven children, there is no reason for the Ministry to subsidize the full cost of operating a preschool. The large communities that lose as result of this may levy the fee from the parents of children aged 3-4. In locations where the Compulsory Education Law applies, the principle that distinguishes between local authorities and regional councils is maintained, with every child at local authorities being budgeted by some 90 percent, while in the regional councils the preschool itself is being budgeted by some 90 percent. That is, preschools for children aged 3-4 at regional councils where the law applies are subsidized by an additional 80 percent on top of the ten percent subsidies for preschool for ages 3-4 in regional councils where the law does not apply. In cases where the law only applies to children from age 4 and a preschool is available for both 3 and 4-year-olds, only the 4-year-olds are budgeted by 90 percent. For the regional council there is a

preference to open preschools at the communities and avoid bussing children. This is the case because transporting children is not simple a safety or budgetary issue, but the cost of transportation in the case of children aged 3-4 is the responsibility of the local authority and is not funded by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education only funds transportation for compulsory kindergarten children and only if the distance between the place of residence and kindergarten is more than 2 kilometers (1.25 miles).²³ As regional councils are home to many small communities, often communities only feature one multi-age preschool for children aged 3-6.

- (4) The budgeting of preschools in the recognized but unofficial stream is undertaken similarly to the budgeting of the official preschools and according to the abovementioned principles. The difference is that the Ministry of Education transfers the budget to the owners, who pay the salaries of preschool teachers and assistants. In this case too, the Ministry of Education calculates the teachers' wages according to an average of twelve years of seniority and the assistants' salaries according to level 6 and ten years of seniority. The Ministry transfers a budget to the owners in accordance with the number of children enrolled at the preschool and does not budget the costs of maintain or operating the preschool or the cost of transportation.
- (5) When preschools are not full, because of the small number of children in the area, the calculation is undertaken with "supplementary children," which is a virtual term. A virtual addition of children is calculated that brings the number of children to 31 in local authorities that receive a grant and to 33 in authorities that do not receive a grant.²⁴ This makes it possible to assign a full-time preschool

²³ For detailed Ministry of Education procedures on the issue on transportation see the following: <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/PortalHorim/Templates/IncludeRegularText.aspx?NRMODE=Published&NRNODEGUID={1D1E41B9-35CE-40FA-B1EF-AB794A24DAB5}&NRORIGINALURL=%2fEducationCMS%2fPortalHorim%2fNehalimVehanchayot%2fHasaot%2f&NRCACHEHINT=Guest#2>

²⁴ The "balancing grant" is a government grant transferred via the Ministry of the Interior in order to compensate local authorities of low economic status and with low revenues, and also to assist in resolving unique problems. In 2004, the Ministry of the Interior started to designate the balancing grants in line with the Gadish Committee recommendations. At this time there are 255 local authorities in Israel, yet not all local authorities receive a balancing grant. There is a group of authorities that in line with the Gadish

teacher and assistant to the preschool. That is, the preschool is treated as if it caters to the required number of children (31 or 33) even though it does not. This situation is very similar to the calculation undertaken with respect to special education preschools, which usually cater to very few children. The calculation of the number of required preschools at the local authorities is made as follows: the number of children in the local authority is divided by the number of children that should be attending each preschool (31 or 33) and by doing so officials calculate the number of preschools, teachers and assistants that should be available there. The authorities can divide the children among the preschools on their own.

The local authorities have great leeway in shaping their education system. Indeed, the Ministry of Education provides the budget in line with its considerations, yet an authority that feels committed to the early childhood issue may invest funds and resources on its behalf and also fundraise from external sources, with the aim of improving the service to the children and their parents. For example, an authority can earmark a budget for assistance at preschools that is mostly needed in multi-age preschools (the Ministry of Education used to fund such school hours in the past yet stopped doing it in recent years); designate a high budget for operating preschools; set a lower number of children per preschool and bear the additional cost of opening preschools that the Ministry does not fund; operate special educational programs; and run summer camps at the preschools while subsidizing children from disadvantaged families (for example, the eleventh month policy at Jerusalem preschools). The authority is supposed to utilize all the budgets that the Ministry of Education is willing to provide, for example, for the purpose of constructing preschools or in order to run educational programs that require matching funds from the authority. However, some local authorities, for various reasons – mostly budget distress that prevents them from covering their part of the costs – are unable to utilize all the resources at their disposal. These unused budgets may total millions of shekels per year, as is the case in one of the authorities that took part in the study.

formula are not entitled to a balancing grant as their revenues, in practice, are higher than their expenditures. In the years 2007-2008, 21 local authorities did not receive a balancing grant.

Some authorities allow preschool teachers a relatively high level of self-management, by earmarking annual budgets or special grants that are designated for the day-to-day operation of the preschool: purchasing art supplies, toys and games, special activities, gardening and so on. In such cases the teachers spend the money as they see fit and report their expenditures to the authority. When the local authority gives the teachers a free hand in managing the preschools' expenses, it grants the teacher and parents a sense of influence in shaping the school and its activities. This also allows for prompt action, without the teacher being dependent on the authority for every minor issue.

B.1.3. Parental fees

The tuition fees at pre-compulsory preschool locations where the law does not apply, are determined by the local authority and usually range from NIS 600 to 800 per month, ten months a year. In local authorities – which are not regional councils – and where the Compulsory Education Law does not apply, a discount policy is in place, as noted. The criteria for discounts are determined by the Ministry of Education according to a means test, and as noted the Ministry covers 75 percent of the discount. Even though the local authority collects the sums and participates in covering the costs, officials at some of the authorities did not always know the portion of their population receiving discounts. One answer regarding the extent of this phenomenon is offered in the explanation to the 2009/2010 Budget Book. It says that in communities that enjoy a phased tuition fee, that is, all the communities that are not included in the Compulsory Education Law from age 3, some 81,459 aged 3-4 attended preschool, and the average tuition fee collected (nationwide) stood at 63 percent. That is, 37percent of the overall tuition fees were granted as discounts to entitled parents.

The additional payments paid by parents are divided into three categories: (1) mandatory payments and especially an insurance fee; (2) SEP – a Supplemental Education Program fee: The *Karev* program, cultural activities, food costs for a long school day, or the *Milat* enriched school day program (where participation is voluntary); (3) enrichment fees – additional payments made by the parents with their approval.

Ministry of Education and local authority budgeting, coupled with the tuition fees at pre-compulsory preschools in locations where the Compulsory Education Law had not yet been implemented, are usually sufficient for covering the wages of preschool teachers and assistants and for maintaining and operating the school. As noted, at times the local authority invests greater resources in order to improve the service to the children and their parents. There are also certain authorities or preschools within authorities that offer supplemental programs, which are funded by the Ministry of Education, the local authority and the parents. Any addition beyond what the Ministry of Education set as a standard, such as extracurricular group activities, trips, culture, retaining a guard, preschool parties, gifts given to the children, breakfast and at times even games, toys and books, require parental funding. However, by law the parents are not required to pay anything except for the tuition fee and the insurance fee, and there is also no right to deprive a child of any service provided to all the children in his or her preschool, even if the parents did not pay for it, whether this is SEP or a service purchased through enrichment fees. At the beginning of the school year, the teacher informs the parents of the SEP fee and enrichment fees. The sum changes from one authority to the next and from one preschool to another, is sometimes set in conjunction with the parents, and in principle is conditional upon their approval. Some authorities guide the teachers on which sums to collect while other authorities avoid this. Based on the interviews, these sums apparently range from NIS 100 to 1,000 per child per year. With the exception of SEP funds, which the teacher passes over to the local authority, the enrichment fees are held in an account that is jointly managed by the teacher and by the preschool parents' committee. There is no doubt that the issue of supplemental fees at preschools creates gaps and inequality in Israel's early childhood education. Well-to-do population groups are willing to pay a great deal for education and boost the level of service provided to their children. In periphery communities, on the other hand, parents do not always pay even for the minimum of cultural activities and trips. In that case the children do not receive such services. This is prevalent in the Arab sector and in the ultra-Orthodox sector, where many parents cannot or are not interested in paying an extra fee.

Chapter 3: Preschools – A demographic review

In this chapter we will describe Israel's preschool system, with an emphasis on preschools for children aged 3-5, that is, the age group that is covered by the Compulsory Education Law and the Free Compulsory Education Law. The reason for this is both principled and practical. In principle, Israeli legislation that pertains to preschool education does not address earlier ages, and from a practical perspective, the data available to us – through the Ministry of Education– also refer to this population group.¹ Our work carries additional significance in light of the social protest that swept Israel recently that cited early the expenses of early childhood education as a major problem for the lower and middle classes. In the course of our work we encountered a problem which we failed to cope with successfully despite our best efforts: incompatibility between the Ministry of Education data that relate to children aged 3-6 attending public preschools only and the data provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) that refer to children aged 2-6 attending both public and private preschools. The gaps between the Ministry's figures and the CBS data – which in one year (2003) reached 12 percent (see Table 1.1 in Appendix 1) – are unreasonable and, despite our inquiries from both agencies, we were unable to elicit a convincing explanation. In the end, we decided to rely on Ministry of Education figures² for several reasons:

- a. Usually, the Ministry of Education's data seemed more internally consistent and appeared to have logical progressions, although there, too, we sometimes encountered inexplicable irregularities.³
- b. The Ministry of Education's figures rely on administrative data of payments made to schools based on reports regarding the number of students, rather than on census data.

¹ The data available to us were supplied by the Administration for Telecommunication and Information Systems and refer to the years 2000 – 2010.

² Although it is clear that the Central Bureau of Statistics also relies on Ministry of Education data.

³ It is important to note that quite a few problems were also discovered in the Ministry of Education data. For example, we will note the fact that following an internal administrative decision, in 2009-2010 more than 400 preschools changed their "type of supervision" from "other" to "national." Another example is the presence of several thousands of children reportedly born abroad, while according to CBS figures there were only a few hundred. These are not the only examples.

- c. The Ministry of Education's figures included several additional variables that enable us to undertake additional calculations unavailable through the CBS' data as they appear in the annual *Statistical Abstract of Israel*.

A. The education system in preschools for children aged 3-5 – Overview

From 2000 to 2009, the number of births (minus infant mortality) in the Jewish sector (including those defined as “not classified by religion”) rose by some 27 percent (from 94,800 to 120,400 per year), while the number of births in the entire Arab sector (including the Druze) declined from some 42,000 to 40,000.⁴ The rise in the number of births in the Jewish sector mostly stems from the high birth rates in the ultra-Orthodox sector, yet recently published figures show that fertility rates also increased among the traditional religious population and among the secular community. Some believe that this changing trend would ultimately result in curbing the process of the growing rate of ultra-Orthodox pupils in the overall Jewish education system.⁵ To us it appears that this trend could at most slow down the process, but not halt it completely. We assert this in light of the fact that overall fertility rates in the ultra-Orthodox community are currently still more than three times higher (6.7 according to the lowest estimate) than in the secular Jewish community (2.1, even though this rate rose from 1.7, where it stood previously). The overall fertility rates of the ultra-Orthodox community are also almost twice those of the Arab community's fertility rates (3.6).⁶

The rise in the number of children in preschools was slightly higher than the rise in the number of births. According to Ministry of Education data, the number of children in preschools rose in the period between 2000 and 2009 by 31 percent (an average increase of 2.8 percent per year). This was the case while in the primary education system during the same period there was only a 16 percent rise, with only a 12 percent increase in the secondary education system.⁷

⁴ According to CBS data, Table 3.1, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2010*.

⁵ Yaakov Faitelson, *The Demographic Trends and Their Implications for Israel's Education System*, The Institute for Zionist Strategies, June 2011.

⁶ See Ahmed Khaliel, “Fertility rates of Jewish and Muslim women in Israel in line with their level of religiosity in the years 1979 -2009.” Working papers series no. 60, the Central Bureau of Statistics, June 2011. It may be important to note that this data did not address the Bedouin population that does not reside in permanent communities as well as East Jerusalem's population.

⁷ *Statistical Abstract of Israel*, No. 61, Tables 8.7 and 8.17.

The gap between the rise in the number of preschool children and the increase in the number of births is first and foremost a product of the increase in preschool attendance rates (the rise as result of immigration during this period was negligible). The rise in attendance is explained by the presence of two processes: the first one is increased awareness among the population, and especially the Arab community, of the importance of early childhood education, and the second is the gradual implementation of the extension of the Compulsory Education Law to children aged 3-4. Completing the process of expanding the education attendance rates – and most certainly the expansion of the Compulsory Education Law to younger age groups – will, of course, require an increase in the budgets allocated for this purpose, both in terms of current expenditures (replacing parental fees with State allowances for children who already attend preschool at their parents' expense, additional preschool teachers and assistants, and the training of a larger number of teachers and assistants to replace those already teaching) and in respect to one-time expenditures (the construction of preschools and training of new teachers over and above the current needs).

The preschool system can be sub-divided as follows:

- a. According to sector.
- b. According to the type of supervision within the Jewish sector – State (henceforth SL), State-religious (henceforth SLR), other (usually this refers to the ultra-Orthodox).⁸
- c. According to age.
- d. According to legal status – those included in the Compulsory Education Law versus those not included in the Compulsory Education Law, and official versus recognized unofficial (to some extent this is parallel to the distinction between public and private).
- e. According to reporting unit (internal classification of the Ministry of Education that is similar but not identical to the geographical classification).

⁸ As previously noted, we encountered the phenomenon of preschools that are not ultra-Orthodox but whose supervision was defined as “other.” At this time we found no explanation for this.

The description of developments will be undertaken as follows:⁹ in the first part of the review we will describe developments in the last decade, with a distinction between the Jewish sectors (including those not classified by religion) and the Arab sector (which is divided into Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, Druze, and Bedouin). In the second part of the review we will focus on the Jewish sector, with the division being undertaken according to the type of supervision of institutions (SL, SLR, other). The discussion of the ultra-Orthodox education system will be more detailed and refer to the three main groups: *Maayan Ha'Torah* schools, the Independent education schools, and recognized unofficial institutions. The third part will examine the Arab sector, with the distinction being made according to the legal status (official, recognized unofficial) and according to sub-sector: Arab, Druze and Bedouin.¹⁰ In the fourth and fifth parts respectively, we will separately address two groups whose development appears to attract particular interest: 6-year-old children and the children attending private preschools. In the final part, the sixth section, we will survey the developments in the last decade in teaching manpower.

B. General demographic snapshot

This section of the chapter will focus on providing a snapshot of all children aged 3-5 based on their division into Jewish and Arab sectors. While analyzing the data we noticed an interesting phenomenon: the period clearly broke down to two time periods – 2000-2005 and 2005-2010 – with different features in each period relating to the growth of the child population and attendance to preschools. Table 1 presents the child population at the beginning, middle and end of the decade, while Table 2 presents the rates of population change in each period.¹¹

The most prominent finding in Tables 1 and 2 is that the rates of change in the decade's second half are fundamentally different than the rates of change in the first half. Among Jews, the rates of change are higher (with the exception of children aged 5) while among the Arabs they are lower. The figures (Table 1) clearly point to an increase in the share of Jewish sector children in all age groups. Most of the rise in the

⁹ When the discussion refers to CBS figures, it will end at 2009, which is the last year we had figures. When we address last year's figures we will refer to the year 2010, based on Ministry of Education data.

¹⁰ Notably, the Arabs object to the prevalent Ministry of Education division and view the three groups as one "Arab" group.

¹¹ The annual attendance rates can be found in Appendix 1.

share of Jewish children took place, as noted, in the second half of the decade. We do not have a convincing explanation for the deviation from this trend among 5-year-olds (Table 2). The negative growth figures in every age group in the Arab sector leave no doubt that the demographic change in the 3-5 age range is relatively in favor of Jewish sector growth.

Table 1 – Population of children aged 3-5, by sector (CBS figures, in thousands)

Age	year	Total	Jews	Arabs	Jews (percent)	Arabs (percent)
3	2000	123.7	87.4	36.2	70.7%	29.3%
	2005	138.8	97.8	41.0	70.5%	29.5%
	2010	151.1	111.8	39.3	74.0%	26.0%
4	2000	120.6	84.8	35.8	70.3%	29.7%
	2005	135.9	94.4	41.5	69.5%	30.5%
	2010	147.6	108.4	39.2	73.5%	26.5%
5	2000	116.1	79.9	36.1	68.9%	31.1%
	2005	135.6	94.8	40.9	69.9%	30.1%
	2010	143.3	104.3	38.9	72.8%	27.2%
3-5	2000	360.3	252.1	108.2	70.0%	30.0%
	2005	410.4	287.0	123.4	69.9%	30.1%
	2010	441.9	324.5	117.4	73.4%	26.6%

Table 2 – Rates of change in population of children aged 3-5, by sector (CBS figures)

Age	Period	Total	Jews	Arabs
3	2000-2005	12.2%	11.8%	13.1%
	2005-2010	8.9%	14.3%	-4.1%
	2000-2010	22.2%	27.8%	8.5%
4	2000-2005	12.7%	11.4%	15.9%
	2005-2010	8.6%	14.8%	-5.6%
	2000-2010	22.4%	27.9%	9.4%
5	2000-2005	16.8%	18.5%	13.1%
	2005-2010	5.6%	10.1%	-4.7%
	2000-2010	23.4%	30.5%	7.7%
3-5	2000-2005	13.9%	13.8%	14.0%
	2005-2010	7.7%	13.1%	-4.8%
	2000-2010	22.7%	28.7%	8.5%

In the face of the demographic changes described in Tables 1 and 2, Tables 3 and 4 present an interesting picture with respect to the preschool participation. First, the Arab sector experienced a large increase in the preschool population among children

aged 3 and 4 (some 98 percent and roughly 74 percent respectively) in the first half of the decade, while there was a complete halt in the following five years (some 0.5 percent and roughly -1.1 percent respectively). Even among 5-year-olds in the Arab sector, the increase in kindergarten population in the first five years of the decade was high, although at lower rates than in the 3-4-year-old age groups (some 23 percent compared to about six percent in the second half of the decade). We can attribute this to the fact that, to begin with, the number of children in this age group who attended Arab sector preschools was relatively higher than the number of children in the 3-4-year-old age groups. The gap in preschool attendance growth rates can apparently be attributed to the fact that most of the Compulsory Education Law's application for the 3-4 age groups in the Arab sector took place in the first half of the decade, as most Arab communities are included in socioeconomic Clusters 1-2 - clusters where the law was implemented first due to their low socioeconomic status.

Table 3 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds
(Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Age	Year	Total	Jews	Arabs	Jews (percent)	Arabs (percent)
3	2000	68.3	56.7	11.6	83.1%	16.9%
	2005	85.8	62.9	22.9	73.3%	26.7%
	2010	97.9	74.9	23.0	76.5%	23.5%
4	2000	91.4	76.4	15.0	83.6%	16.4%
	2005	112.5	86.3	26.1	76.8%	23.2%
	2010	121.0	95.2	25.8	78.6%	21.4%
5	2000	108.6	82.0	26.6	75.5%	24.5%
	2005	124.3	91.5	32.7	73.6%	26.4%
	2010	137.4	102.6	34.8	74.7%	25.3%
3-5	2000	268.3	215.1	53.2	80.2%	19.8%
	2005	322.5	240.7	81.8	74.6%	25.4%
	2010	356.2	272.6	83.6	76.5%	23.5%

When examining the Jewish sector one can see a prominent rise among 3-year-olds in the second half of the decade (some 19 percent compared to about eleven percent in the first half), while among 4-year-olds the growth rates were higher during the course of the first half of the decade (some 13 percent compared to roughly ten percent). This may stem from the prioritization of implementing the Compulsory Education Law's expansion among 4-year-olds in the early period, and shifting the emphasis to 3-year-

olds in the second period. Among 5-year-olds we saw stability in the rise in kindergarten attendance around the 12 percent mark.

**Table 4 – Rates of changes in preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds
(Ministry of Education data)**

Age	Period	Total	Jews	Arabs
3	2000-2005	25.6%	10.8%	98.0%
	2005-2010	14.1%	19.0%	0.5%
	2000-2010	43.3%	31.9%	99.0%
4	2000-2005	23.1%	13.0%	74.0%
	2005-2010	7.6%	10.2%	-1.1%
	2000-2010	32.4%	24.6%	72.0%
5	2000-2005	14.4%	11.6%	23.1%
	2005-2010	10.5%	12.1%	6.2%
	2000-2010	26.5%	25.1%	30.7%
3-5	2000-2005	20.2%	11.9%	53.8%
	2005-2010	10.5%	13.2%	2.3%
	2000-2010	32.8%	26.7%	57.2%

The meaning of the demographic and system-wide changes is shown in Table 5, which presents the preschool attendance rates among children aged 3-5.¹² A notable change is apparent in the attendance rates among the 3-4-year-old age groups in the Arab sector, with most of this increase taking place in the first half of the decade. The explanation for this phenomenon relates to the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law, which was first implemented in Clusters 1-2 where most of the Arab population communities, and particularly the Bedouins, are categorized. The relative stability in the education rates of the 3-4 age groups in the second half of the decade is puzzling. It is possible that as a result of the completion of the implementation of the law in communities in Clusters 1-2 and the failure to implement the law in the higher clusters, the effect of the law was maximized in the first half of the decade. In any

¹² The figures for the years presented in Table 1 do not include children born abroad, that is, new immigrants. Hence, when dividing the number of children at preschools by the overall number of children in this age group, the denominator is reduced. However, the number of immigrant children published by the CBS is rather low. Hence, we believe that the preschool attendance rates according to our calculations are biased upwards, yet not significantly so. This is apparently also the reason why in one case we calculated an attendance rate that is higher than 100 percent. Note that the attendance rate is calculated according to the original data and not according to the figures in the tables (which are rounded), so that the attendance rate calculation according to the figures in Tables 1 and 3 may provide somewhat different results than the ones detailed in Table 5. This remark is also applicable to the tables presented later in the chapter.

case, it appears that this issue deserves further scrutiny.¹³ Another puzzling finding is that in spite of the law, only about 60 percent of the 3-4-year-olds attend preschools. We would expect much higher rates since most of the Arab population lives in areas that should be covered by the law. It is also quite surprising that 5-year-olds saw a major rise in kindergarten attendance in the second half of the decade, we would expect that most of them were already in kindergartens.

Table 5 – Preschool attendance rates (the number of children attending preschools divided by the overall number of children in a given age group)

Age	Year	Total	Jews	Arabs
3	2000	55.2%	64.9%	31.9%
	2005	61.8%	64.3%	55.8%
	2010	64.8%	67.0%	58.5%
4	2000	75.8%	90.1%	42.0%
	2005	82.7%	91.4%	63.0%
	2010	82.0%	87.8%	66.0%
5	2000	93.6%	102.6%	73.6%
	2005	91.6%	96.6%	80.1%
	2010	95.9%	98.3%	89.3%
3-5	2000	74.5%	85.3%	49.2%
	2005	78.6%	83.9%	66.3%
	2010	80.6%	84.0%	71.2%

As to the Jewish sector, where there is normally stability in attendance rates in every age group, these rates were found to rise from one age group to the next reaching almost full attendance among 4-year-olds and full attendance among 5-year-olds (we should keep in mind that Ministry of Education figures do not include all children in the 3-4 age groups as some of them attend private preschools.) Another interesting phenomenon is the minor decline in attendance rates among 4-year-olds between the beginning of the decade and its end.¹⁴

¹³ This assumption is reinforced by the fact that the rate of children attending Bedouin preschools in the 3-4 age groups rose much more rapidly than their rate among the Arabs. This is explained by the fact that all Bedouin communities are in Clusters 1-2.

¹⁴ At this stage we have no explanation for this. The reason may be some parents' decision to turn to private preschools. The phenomenon of putting children in private preschools is also described in Chapter 2 and its sources are different in the Jewish and Arab sectors. While in the Jewish sector this likely stems from a search for alternatives that offer better service (for example, fewer children per teacher), in the Arab sector it apparently stems from the growing number of private preschools that provide worse service that is much cheaper. This is of course only an assumption, as the issue was not examined in depth.

In summary, the growth in the number of children per age group in the past five years was higher in the Jewish sector than in the Arab sector, most probably as a result of changes in birth rates, yet the rise in preschool attendance rates was higher in the Arab sector than in the Jewish sector because of the growing awareness of the importance of early childhood education, as well as the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law's expansion to the 3-4 age groups. Hence, the attendance rates in the Jewish sector remained stable overall in the 3-5 age groups, while in the Arab sector, upon the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law, attendance rates grew significantly during the 2000-2005 period. As result of these two processes, the share of Arab children among all preschool pupils rose and approached their overall share in the population.

As can be seen, the Compulsory Education Law for 5-year-olds has been in place for a long time now. What would be the cost of completing the implementation in the 3-4 age groups? This cost should be divided into various components, as follows:

- a. The cost of the tuition fees currently paid by the parents that will be wholly transferred to the State budget. This costs stands at some NIS 800 million at this time.
- b. The cost of tuition of the additional children. According to the 2010 figures, some 80,000 children aged 3-4 still do not attend public preschools (about 17,000 of them attend private preschools). Assuming an average of some 30 children per preschool, this will require an additional 2,700 preschools. The cost of a preschool's day-to-day operations at this time (the cost of teachers, assistants, and preschool activities) stands at roughly NIS 250,000. Hence, the additional operational costs of the law's full implementation are roughly NIS 670 million. As noted, later on this cost can be somewhat reduced by more strictly ensuring that 6-year-old children do not remain in compulsory kindergarten. At the end of the day, the additional current cost following the law's implementation (components a and b) will amount to roughly a billion and a half shekels.
- c. The cost of building preschools and training teachers. Beyond the current expenditure, we must take into account the construction costs (building 2,700 preschools at about half a million shekels per class) and the training of some

additional 4,000 preschool teachers, at about 250 thousand shekels per teacher. Naturally, capital expenses can be reduced by utilizing mobile structures, easing the limitations on using rented apartments and making better use of existing manpower.

C. Preschool attendance in the Jewish sector

In this part of the study we will examine in greater detail the changes that took place in the demographic makeup of the preschool population in the Jewish sector (including children defined as “not classified by religion”). As no data are available regarding the religious affiliation of the entire age group, the “religious” identification will refer to the definition of the preschool as belonging to the State, State-religious or “other” supervision system.¹⁵

Tables 6 and 7 show several interesting phenomena that took place over the course of the last decade and that highlight the fact that we should examine each sub-group within the system separately, in addition to the overall examination of all children in the system. Naturally, the most prominent phenomenon is the growth in the ultra-Orthodox education system among all age groups, with this mostly taking place in the first half of the decade. This period is also characterized by a complete decline or at most a slight rise in the number of children in the State and State-religious education systems. On the other hand, the second half of the decade is characterized by a slowed down growth in the ultra-Orthodox education system and a sharp rise in preschool population among 3-year-olds in the SL and SLR education system (some 30 percent and 25 percent respectively). A similar trend took place among the 4-5 age groups, although to a more limited extent. In any case, the growth in the preschool population among children aged 3-5 in the SL and R education systems in the second period was greater than in the first period, as opposed to the ultra-Orthodox sector.

These phenomena, which highlight the differences between the ultra-Orthodox sector and the SL and SLR sectors, are reflected in Table 6, which indicates two fundamental facts. The first fact is that the share of ultra-Orthodox children who

¹⁵ As previously noted, our working assumption is that the “other” type of supervision in the Jewish sector wholly refers to the ultra-Orthodox sector, although recently we discovered that there are some anomalies here. Further examination revealed that the changes refer to a relatively small group of preschools (some 400 preschools classified as ultra-Orthodox while they were in fact State schools). As result of this, we saw a slight increase in the trend of growing attendance at State preschools, while the trend of growing attendance at ultra-Orthodox preschools was moderated.

attend preschool among the overall number of children who attend preschools in the Jewish sector rose significantly during the decade among all age groups. This is opposed to the sharp and moderate decline in the share of children attending SL and SLR educational facilities, respectively. The second fact that stands out in Table 6 is that the rise in the share of children attending preschools in the ultra-Orthodox sector was curbed in the past five years, as was the decline in the share of children in the SL education system.

Table 6 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, Jewish sector
(Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Age	Year	Total	State	State religious	Ultra orthodox	State (percent)	State Religious (percent)	Ultra Orthodox (percent)
3	2000	56.7	26.5	12.3	17.9	46.8%	21.7%	31.5%
	2005	62.9	25.8	12.9	24.2	41.0%	20.5%	38.5%
	2010	74.9	31.1	16.2	27.7	41.5%	21.6%	36.9%
4	2000	76.4	41.2	16.2	19.0	54.0%	21.2%	24.8%
	2005	86.3	43.2	17.3	25.9	50.0%	20.0%	30.0%
	2010	95.2	47.3	19.0	28.8	49.7%	20.0%	30.3%
5	2000	82.0	47.3	16.7	18.0	57.7%	20.4%	21.9%
	2005	91.5	49.5	17.2	24.9	54.0%	18.8%	27.2%
	2010	102.6	54.0	19.1	29.5	52.6%	18.6%	28.8%
3-5	2000	215.1	115.1	45.2	54.8	53.5%	21.0%	25.5%
	2005	240.7	118.5	47.3	75.0	49.2%	19.7%	31.1%
	2010	272.6	132.3	54.3	86.0	48.5%	19.9%	31.6%

Table 7 – Rates of change in preschool attendance among the 3-5-year-olds
Jewish sector (Ministry of Education data)

Age	Period	Total	State	State religious	Ultra orthodox
3	2000-2005	10.8%	-2.8%	4.9%	35.1%
	2005-2010	19.0%	20.4%	25.2%	14.4%
	2000-2010	31.9%	17.0%	31.3%	54.6%
4	2000-2005	13.0%	4.7%	6.7%	36.6%
	2005-2010	10.2%	9.5%	10.3%	11.4%
	2000-2010	24.6%	14.7%	17.7%	52.2%
5	2000-2005	11.6%	4.6%	2.7%	38.4%
	2005-2010	12.1%	9.1%	11.1%	18.6%
	2000-2010	25.1%	14.2%	14.0%	64.1%
3-5	2000-2005	11.9%	2.9%	4.7%	36.7%
	2005-2010	13.2%	11.7%	14.6%	14.8%
	2000-2010	26.7%	15.0%	20.0%	56.9%

As result of the unavailability of data regarding religious affiliation at birth, we cannot examine whether the education rates among various population groups were similar or different. We tend to assume that the significant rise in the ultra-Orthodox education system is mostly explained by natural population growth. However, the sharp increases in the SL and SLR education systems in the second half of the decade, compared to the sharp decline in the growth rate in ultra-Orthodox education, raises questions. It is possible that at the beginning of the decade the ultra-Orthodox education system grew not only as result of natural growth but also as result of an increase in education rates, and also because of the intake of children who were not a natural part of the ultra-Orthodox community – with this process stopping and possibly even reversing in the second half of the decade. This argument requires an answer to the following question: out of the number of children who attended preschool a certain year and remained in the preschool the following year, how many changed their “framework” (for example, switched the following year from an ultra-Orthodox institution to an SLR one, from an SLR institution to an SL one, and so on)? As can be seen in Table 8, which presents the “net” switch figures (children entering a certain education system minus the ones who leave it,) the figures leave no doubt that the overwhelming majority of children remained in the frameworks chosen by their parents upon their entry into preschool, while among the minority that switched a “framework,” the switch to the State education system was greater than the switch to the ultra-Orthodox or State-religious education systems.

Table 8 – “Net” switches from one educational framework to others in the following year

Period	State	State religious	Ultra orthodox
2000-2001	1,106	-98	-1,008
2004-2005	1,423	-484	-939
2009-2010	1,407	240	-1,647

A separate examination of the ultra-Orthodox sector reveals several interesting findings. Thus far we addressed the ultra-Orthodox sector as if it was homogenous. However, in reality this sector is made up of three sub-categories for which we have data: the Independent education system; the *Maayan Ha'Torah* schools; and, other recognized institutions. At the same time, we have no data for a fourth group – the

exempt institutions. At the time of entering primary school, most children enter the Independent education system, a significant share enter the exempt institutions, and the rest are equally divided, more or less, between the *Maayan Ha'Torah* schools and other recognized institutions. It seems, though, that in preschool the division is totally different. Most children are enrolled in the recognized preschools, while only a minority are enrolled in the preschools of the large school systems. Moreover, the share of the recognized preschools, and the number of children who attend them, are growing rapidly, while the share of the preschools belonging to the other systems continue to decrease (the number of children attending the Independent education system is declining but is stable in the *Maayan Ha'Torah*-schools). The data may point to substantive trends in the ultra-Orthodox population's preferences, yet they may also point to adaptation to an organizational-budgetary reality that is unclear to us and which encourages those who turn to religious frameworks to prefer recognized unofficial preschools.

Tables 9 and 10 show that, in relative terms, the Independent education system (henceforth "Independent") experienced a consistent and significant decline in the number of children attending preschool in the course of the decade, among all age groups. At the same time, in the *Maayan Ha'Torah* schools (henceforth "*Maayan*"), the figures point to a changing trend in the number of children attending: following the declines seen in the schools in the first half of the decade, we saw increases in the past five years. In any case, it is important to note that we are referring to relatively low absolute numbers in both these frameworks compared to the rest of the ultra-Orthodox sector. Hence, drawing conclusions here requires extra caution. Especially prominent in the face of these two groups is the developing growth in preschool attendance at recognized institutions. First, it is important to note that this is the largest group among the three groups that comprise the ultra-Orthodox sector and is even bigger than the two other groups combined. Secondly, the increase in attendance at recognized institutions among all age groups was dramatic, so that from a rate of some 58 percent in every age group at the beginning of the decade, the number of children attending recognized preschools at this time stands at 76 to 78 percent of the overall ultra-Orthodox preschool attendance in every age group. These figures leave no room for doubt as to the absolute and relative increase in the number of children

attending recognized institutions in the ultra-Orthodox education system, even though most of this growth took place in the first half of the decade.

**Table 9 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, ultra-Orthodox sector
(Ministry of Education data, in thousands)**

Age	Year	Total	Recognized	Independent	Maa-yan	Recognized (percent)	Independent (percent)	Maa-yan (percent)
3	2000	17.9	10.4	3.8	3.7	58.2%	21.2%	20.6%
	2005	24.2	17.8	3.2	3.2	73.5%	13.3%	13.1%
	2010	27.7	21.6	2.4	3.6	78.3%	8.8%	13.0%
4	2000	19.0	10.9	4.2	3.8	57.8%	22.4%	19.9%
	2005	25.9	18.8	3.5	3.5	72.8%	13.7%	13.5%
	2010	28.8	22.2	2.9	3.7	77.1%	9.9%	13.0%
5	2000	18.0	10.5	4.0	3.4	58.5%	22.3%	19.2%
	2005	24.9	18.1	3.5	3.3	72.7%	14.0%	13.3%
	2010	29.5	22.6	2.8	4.1	76.6%	9.4%	14.0%
3-5	2000	54.8	31.9	12.0	10.9	58.1%	22.0%	19.9%
	2005	75.0	54.7	10.3	10.0	73.0%	13.7%	13.3%
	2010	86.0	66.5	8.1	11.5	77.3%	9.4%	13.3%

To sum up, we noted the following:

- a. The increase in preschool attendance in the Jewish sector mostly stemmed from the growth in the recognized education system with ultra-Orthodox education. At the same time, the growth rates in preschool attendance in the ultra-Orthodox system declined significantly in the second half of the decade, while the opposite trend occurred in the SL and SLR education systems.
- b. The number of children in each age group in the ultra-Orthodox sector ranged from some 18,000 in 2000 to about 30,000 in 2010. In the SL education system, the higher the age group the higher the number of children attending preschools, while in the SLR system stability in preschool attendance was maintained in the 4-5 age groups, preceded by an increase between the ages of 3 and 4. This can attest to differential implementation of the Compulsory Education Law, as the ultra-Orthodox community, just like the State-religious population (although less notably so) is mostly characterized by weaker socioeconomic traits.

Table 10 – Rate of change in preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, ultra-Orthodox sector (Ministry of Education data)

Age	Period	Total	Recognized	Independent	Maayan
3	2000-2005	35.1%	70.9%	-15.1%	-14.0%
	2005-2010	14.4%	21.7%	-24.6%	12.8%
	2000-2010	54.6%	108.0%	-36.0%	-2.9%
4	2000-2005	36.6%	72.1%	-16.4%	-6.9%
	2005-2010	11.4%	18.1%	-19.6%	6.9%
	2000-2010	52.2%	103.2%	-32.8%	-0.6%
5	2000-2005	38.4%	71.7%	-12.8%	-3.9%
	2005-2010	18.6%	25.0%	-20.4%	24.8%
	2000-2010	64.1%	114.6%	-30.6%	19.9%
3-5	2000-2005	36.7%	71.6%	-14.8%	-8.4%
	2005-2010	14.8%	21.6%	-21.4%	14.7%
	2000-2010	56.9%	108.5%	-33.1%	5.1%

D. Preschool attendance in the Arab sector

As in the Jewish sector, the Arab sector does not constitute a homogenous whole and can be divided into three sub-divisions. One is according to sub-sector (Arabs, Bedouin, Druze – we will not further divide out the Circassian population because of their small number); the second one is according to legal status (official, recognized); and, the third one is according to religion (Muslims, Christians). We will address only the first two sub-divisions as we do not have data relating to religion.

Tables 11 and 12 show an increase in the number of Arab children who attend preschools (including Druze and Bedouin) in the first half of the decade (about 98 percent of 3-year-olds, some 74 percent of 4-year-olds, and 23 percent of 5-year-olds). This significant increase took place among the Bedouins and Arabs but not among the Druze (with the exception of 3-year-olds in the first half of the decade). However, we should note that the absolute number of 5-year-olds who attend kindergartens among the Arabs and Bedouins are much greater than the comparable numbers in the 3-4 age groups, a fact that indicates that the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law is still far from being complete. In any case, the fact that the main growth in all age groups took place in the years 2000-2005 is prominent in the Arab sector.

**Table 11 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, Arab sector, by sub-sector
(Ministry of Education data, in thousands)**

Age	Year	Total	Arabs	Druze	Bedouins	Arabs (percent)	Druz (percent)	Bedouins (percent)
3	2000	11.6	7.9	2.0	1.7	68.0%	17.6%	14.4%
	2005	22.9	15.7	2.3	4.9	68.8%	9.9%	21.3%
	2010	23.0	15.7	2.4	4.9	68.2%	10.6%	21.2%
4	2000	15.0	10.3	2.4	2.3	68.2%	16.2%	15.5%
	2005	26.1	17.7	2.6	5.8	67.7%	10.0%	22.3%
	2010	25.8	17.5	2.4	5.9	67.9%	9.3%	22.8%
5	2000	26.6	18.7	2.8	5.1	70.2%	10.7%	19.1%
	2005	32.7	23.2	2.9	6.7	70.7%	8.7%	20.6%
	2010	34.8	24.3	2.8	7.6	70.0%	8.2%	21.8%
3-5	2000	53.2	36.8	7.3	9.1	69.2%	13.8%	17.0%
	2005	81.8	56.6	7.8	17.4	69.2%	9.5%	21.3%
	2010	83.6	57.6	7.7	18.4	68.8%	9.2%	22.0%

Table 12 – Rates of change in preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, Arab sector, by sub-sector (Ministry of Education data)

Age	Period	Total	Arab	Druze	Bedouins
3	2000-2005	98.0%	100.2%	11.5%	193.6%
	2005-2010	0.5%	-0.3%	7.0%	0.2%
	2000-2010	99.0%	99.5%	19.3%	194.1%
4	2000-2005	74.0%	72.6%	7.5%	149.7%
	2005-2010	-1.1%	-0.8%	-8.3%	1.1%
	2000-2010	72.0%	71.1%	-1.4%	152.5%
5	2000-2005	23.1%	23.9%	0.2%	32.9%
	2005-2010	6.2%	5.1%	-0.4%	12.7%
	2000-2010	30.7%	30.3%	-0.2%	49.9%
3-5	2000-2005	53.8%	53.8%	5.8%	92.4%
	2005-2010	2.3%	1.7%	-0.9%	5.3%
	2000-2010	57.2%	56.5%	4.8%	102.7%

A phenomenon that did not elicit much attention thus far in the media and among Jewish educators in Israel is the rising trend among a growing number in the Arab sector to turn to the recognized unofficial education system (henceforth “recognized”). We indicated this in our previous two reviews of the primary and post-

primary education system.¹⁶ Now, we have the opportunity to examine this phenomenon with respect to preschools as well. The data are presented in Tables 13 and 14.

Over the last decade, we saw a change in the distribution of pupils between institutions defined as official and recognized institutions that are not official (henceforth “recognized”). In the first five years, the increase in the number of children attending preschools was impressive, with the increase reaching to some 173 percent among 3-year-olds and about 123 percent among 4-year-olds at recognized preschools. In the second half of the decade, the increase in the number of children attending recognized preschools was more moderate, with a decline recorded in the number of children attending official preschools (about nine percent among 3-year-olds and 13 percent among 4-year-olds). These figures point to the fact that parallel to the implementation of the Compulsory Education Law, changes took place within the Arab sector with respect to the internal division between official and recognized institutions. Apparently, the phenomenon that was discussed in the Taub Center's *State of the Nation Report* in both 2009 and 2010, which indicated that a trend towards private education in the Arab systems is also noted.¹⁷ The data may also point to switches to the recognized education system, which may provide a less expensive service, as some of it is provided by for-profit preschools that offer a lower quality of services (as discussed previously in Chapter 2).

In light of the similar characteristics of preschool attendance in the 3-4 age groups as shown in these tables, the figures on kindergarten attendance among 5-year-olds point to two interesting issues. Firstly, the relative share of the children attending recognized institutions is considerably lower than the share of the children attending official institutions (Table 13). Secondly, the number of 5-year-olds attending official institutions is significantly higher than the number of 4-year-olds attending official institutions in the same years. These figures may indicate that compulsory kindergartens are a higher priority than pre-compulsory preschools. In addition, the

¹⁶ Nachum Blass (2010), "The Education System – an inside look", *State of the Nation Report 2009*, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, pp. 137 – 182. Nachum Blass (2011), "Developments in Israel's Education System *State of the Nation Report 2010*, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, pp. 203 – 246.

¹⁷ See footnote 14.

possibility to choose between recognized and official institutions is declining in favor of the official institutions.

Table 13 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, Arab sector, by legal status (Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Age	Year	Total	Official	Recognized	Official (percent)	Recognized (percent)
3	2000	11.6	8.5	3.0	73.9%	26.1%
	2005	22.9	14.7	8.2	64.0%	36.0%
	2010	23.0	13.4	9.7	58.1%	41.9%
4	2000	15.0	11.0	4.0	73.1%	26.9%
	2005	26.1	17.1	9.0	65.5%	34.5%
	2010	25.8	15.0	10.9	57.9%	42.1%
5	2000	26.6	24.7	1.9	92.9%	7.1%
	2005	32.7	29.5	3.2	90.1%	9.9%
	2010	34.8	29.2	5.6	83.9%	16.1%
3-5	2000	53.2	44.2	8.9	83.2%	16.8%
	2005	81.8	61.3	20.5	74.9%	25.1%
	2010	83.6	57.5	26.1	68.8%	31.2%

Table 14 – Rates of change in preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, Arab sector, by legal status (Ministry of Education data)

Age	Period	Total	Official	Recognized
3	2000-2005	98.0%	71.4%	173.4%
	2005-2010	0.5%	-8.8%	17.1%
	2000-2010	99.0%	56.3%	220.3%
4	2000-2005	74.0%	55.8%	123.4%
	2005-2010	-1.1%	-12.5%	20.4%
	2000-2010	72.0%	36.3%	169.1%
5	2000-2005	23.1%	19.4%	72.0%
	2005-2010	6.2%	-1.1%	72.2%
	2000-2010	30.7%	18.1%	196.2%
3-5	2000-2005	53.8%	38.5%	129.4%
	2005-2010	2.3%	-6.1%	27.3%
	2000-2010	57.2%	30.0%	192.1%

E. Geographic and socioeconomic snapshot

We will now move on to presenting the trends of preschool attendance according to geographical regions and the socioeconomic status of the various communities. For

the purpose of geographical division, we will use the Ministry of the Interior's division into districts. The district boundaries are shown in Appendix 2.¹⁸ The socioeconomic level of each community is determined by population characteristics, including age, family size, education, workforce characteristics, standard of living, and government allowances. The communities are divided into ten socioeconomic clusters. In our analysis we combined every pair of adjacent clusters into a single group.

Tables 15 and 16 present the preschool attendance rates according to ages, years and districts. It can be seen that the highest rates of change with respect to preschool attendance are in the Judea and Samaria district, throughout the last decade and in all age groups. The main reason for this is likely the fact that this district enjoyed significant internal migration in the past decade.¹⁹ The Jerusalem and Central districts also showed relatively high growth in preschool attendance, especially in the second half of the decade. The Northern, Southern and Haifa districts experienced an average and above average increase in preschool attendance in the first half of the decade, yet the rise in attendance was much smaller in the years 2005-2010. The picture is reversed in the Tel-Aviv district: the growth in attendance was lower than average in the first half of the decade and higher than average in the second half. Under a division according to ages, we can see that the growing attendance in the Jerusalem district was mostly among 5-year-olds, while in the Northern, Southern and Central districts the higher attendance in the first half of the decade was mostly among the 3-4 age groups.

Tables 17 and 18 present the preschool attendance data according to ages, years and socioeconomic cluster. The most prominent result, in each age group, is that in the years 2000-2005 the greatest increase in preschool attendance was in the lower clusters, while in the years 2005-2010 the greatest increase was in the higher clusters. Apparently, the growth in the first half of the decade was mostly the result of the implementation of the Free Compulsory Education Law in relatively weak communities, while the growth in the second half of the decade was mostly among children in more well-established communities that increased the supply of preschools

¹⁸ In 2010 there were no Israeli citizens in the Gaza region, and we therefore did not include the data from the Gaza region from the 2000 and 2005. As result, the total sum of attendance figures in the districts is slightly lower than the total attendance.

¹⁹ See CBS, *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2010*, Table 2.6.

or their quality. We can also see that most of the increase, both in the lower clusters in the first half of the decade and in the higher clusters in the second half of the decade, was among 3-year-olds.

Table 15 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, by district
(Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Age	Year	Total	Central	Jerusalem	Northern	Southern	Tel-Aviv	Haifa	Samaria
3	2000	68.3	13.3	7.8	15.7	11.4	8.5	6.8	4.7
	2005	85.8	16.0	9.1	21.2	15.0	8.9	8.9	6.4
	2010	97.9	19.7	11.0	21.3	16.1	11.5	9.5	8.8
4	2000	91.4	20.4	9.8	18.8	14.2	13.5	9.6	4.9
	2005	112.5	25.1	11.6	23.7	18.3	14.5	12.0	7.0
	2010	121.0	28.2	13.2	22.9	19.3	16.4	11.9	9.1
5	2000	108.6	24.1	12.9	22.3	17.6	14.5	12.3	4.7
	2005	124.3	28.9	15.6	24.5	19.7	15.3	13.5	6.5
	2010	137.4	32.9	18.5	24.5	21.3	17.4	13.8	8.9
3-5	2000	268.3	57.8	30.4	56.8	43.2	36.6	28.6	14.3
	2005	322.5	70.0	36.4	69.4	53.0	38.7	34.4	20.0
	2010	356.2	80.8	42.6	68.7	56.7	45.3	35.1	26.9

Table 16 – Rates of change in preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, by districts (Ministry of Education data), percent

Age	Period	Total	Central	Jerusalem	Northern	Southern	Tel-Aviv	Haifa	Samaria
3	2000-2005	25.6%	17.7%	20.2%	35.1%	31.7%	4.2%	31.1%	37.9%
	2005-2010	14.1%	19.9%	23.2%	0.5%	7.5%	28.9%	6.8%	37.7%
	2000-2010	43.3%	41.1%	48.1%	35.8%	41.6%	34.3%	40.0%	89.9%
4	2000-2005	23.1%	19.0%	23.2%	26.2%	28.8%	7.1%	25.5%	41.9%
	2005-2010	7.6%	13.2%	12.4%	-3.3%	5.5%	13.6%	-1.2%	29.8%
	2000-2010	32.4%	34.7%	38.5%	22.0%	35.8%	21.6%	24.0%	84.1%
5	2000-2005	14.4%	21.2%	19.8%	9.7%	12.1%	5.4%	10.0%	38.7%
	2005-2010	10.5%	18.4%	13.9%	0.1%	8.0%	13.9%	2.1%	36.9%
	2000-2010	26.5%	43.5%	36.4%	9.9%	21.0%	20.1%	12.4%	89.9%
3-5	2000-2005	20.2%	19.6%	21.1%	22.2%	22.8%	5.8%	20.2%	39.6%
	2005-2010	10.5%	17.1%	15.5%	-0.9%	7.0%	17.2%	2.2%	34.6%
	2000-2010	32.8%	40.1%	39.8%	21.0%	31.3%	24.0%	22.8%	87.9%

**Table 17 – Preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, by socioeconomic cluster
(Ministry of Education data, in thousands)**

Age	Year	Total	Clusters 1-2	Clusters 3-4	Clusters 5-6	Clusters 7-8	Clusters 9-10
3	2000	68.5	9.8	20.1	25.9	11.8	0.8
	2005	85.5	19.4	25.7	27.0	12.5	0.8
	2010	98.2	22.2	28.1	30.8	15.7	1.3
4	2000	91.2	11.3	24.6	34.3	19.5	1.6
	2005	112.1	21.0	30.2	36.9	22.2	1.8
	2010	121.1	23.2	31.7	39.2	24.7	2.3
5	2000	108.3	14.7	32.3	37.5	22.0	1.8
	2005	123.9	20.6	36.5	39.9	24.9	2.0
	2010	137.3	24.0	40.1	42.9	27.7	2.6
3-5	2000	268.0	35.8	77.0	97.7	53.3	4.2
	2005	321.5	60.9	92.5	103.8	59.6	4.7
	2010	356.5	69.5	99.9	112.9	68.1	6.2

**Table 18 – Rates of change in preschool attendance among 3-5-year-olds, by
socioeconomic cluster (Ministry of Education data), percent**

Age	Period	Total	Cluster 1-2	Cluster 3-4	Cluster 5-6	Cluster 7-8	Cluster 9-10
3	2000-2005	24.8%	97.1%	27.8%	4.0%	6.2%	7.9%
	2005-2010	14.8%	14.7%	9.2%	14.2%	25.6%	52.1%
	2000-2010	43.3%	126.0%	39.6%	18.7%	33.4%	64.1%
4	2000-2005	22.9%	85.8%	23.1%	7.8%	13.4%	15.5%
	2005-2010	8.0%	10.9%	4.7%	6.2%	11.4%	27.1%
	2000-2010	32.8%	105.9%	28.9%	14.5%	26.3%	46.8%
5	2000-2005	14.4%	40.1%	13.0%	6.5%	13.1%	11.6%
	2005-2010	10.8%	16.9%	9.8%	7.5%	11.2%	29.0%
	2000-2010	26.8%	63.7%	24.0%	14.4%	25.8%	44.0%
3-5	2000-2005	20.0%	70.1%	20.1%	6.3%	11.7%	12.4%
	2005-2010	10.9%	14.1%	8.0%	8.8%	14.3%	32.5%
	2000-2010	33.0%	94.1%	29.7%	15.6%	27.6%	48.8%

F. Kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds

The analysis of this age group will be done in a different manner than was done so far with respect to the 3-5 age groups, for two reasons: firstly, since 2004, the CBS and Ministry of Education data regarding 6-year-olds became more consistent with each other (as opposed to earlier years). Secondly, the kindergarten attendance figures

available to us from the CBS only extend to 2009. As a result of this, assuming that in 2010 the data will still be consistent, the following analysis will refer to the years 2005-2010 based on the Ministry of Education data.

According to the Ministry of Education data, the years 2005-2010 saw a prominent increase of some 20 percent in the number of 6-year-olds who continue to attend kindergarten (Table 20). As this increase is higher than the rise in the number of children in this age group (some 12 percent), the final result is an increase in the rate of children out of the entire 6-year-old age group who continue to attend kindergarten. Another interesting phenomenon emerging from the data is that parents in the Arab sector, who in the past tended not to keep 6-year-olds in kindergarten, are beginning to do so, thus minimizing the difference between themselves and Jewish sector parents. So, for example, the increase in 6-year-olds who continue to attend kindergarten in the Arab sector stood at some 32 percent, compared to about 19 percent in the Jewish sector. (We should qualify this remark, though, because of the fact that we are referring to relatively low absolute numbers).

Table 19 – The 6-year-old population (CBS figures, in thousands) and rates of change

Year	Total	Jews	Arabs	Jews	Arabs
2005	129.3	91.7	39.4	70.9%	30.5%
2010	144.2	103.6	40.9	71.9%	28.4%
% Change	11.5%	13.0%	3.7%		

Table 20 – Kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds (Ministry of Education data, in thousands) and rates of change

Year	Total	Jews	Arabs	Jews	Arabs
2005	17.0	15.7	1.3	92.3%	7.7%
2010	20.3	18.6	1.7	91.5%	8.5%
% Change	19.6%	18.5%	32.0%		

Based on Tables 22 and 23, we can identify the source of the increase in kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds in the Jewish sector. So, for example, relating to the absolute numbers of 6-year-olds who continued to attend kindergartens, out of an increase of some 3,000 children, about 2,500 were from the ultra-Orthodox sector. When examining the ultra-Orthodox sector, some 2,100 of these children attend

recognized institutions. As noted elsewhere,²⁰ the increase among 6-year-olds remaining in kindergarten has significant budgetary implications. Every child who stays in kindergarten for another year increases the cost of kindergarten education. According to our estimate, assuming that about half the children who remain in kindergarten do so without proper justification, we are dealing with about 10,000 children, who require an addition of at least 350 kindergartens, at a cost of some NIS 1 million per kindergarten class: about NIS 250,000 in operational costs, some NIS 500,000 in construction costs, and roughly NIS 250,000 in training new kindergarten teachers. Naturally, these expenses can be reduced by enlisting the help of private kindergartens or employees who were trained as teachers and retired or who never joined the profession despite their training.

Table 21 – Kindergarten attendance rates²¹ among 6-year-olds

Year	Total	Jews	Arabs
2005	13.1%	17.1%	3.3%
2010	14.1%	17.9%	4.2%

Table 22 – Kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds and rates of change, Jewish sector (Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Year	Total	State	State Religious	Ultra Orthodox	State (percent)	State Religious (percent)	Ultra Orthodox (percent)
2005	15.7	8.4	2.7	4.6	53.5%	17.5%	29.0%
2010	18.6	8.7	2.8	7.0	46.9%	15.2%	37.8%
% Change	18.5%	4.0%	3.5%	54.4%			

Table 23 – Kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds and rates of change, ultra-Orthodox sector (Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Year	Total	Recognized	Independent	Maayan	Recognized (percent)	Independent (percent)	Maayan (percent)
2005	4.6	3.3	0.7	0.5	72.6%	15.9%	11.5%
2010	7.0	5.4	0.6	1.0	76.4%	8.9%	14.7%
% Change	54.4%	62.5%	-13.6%	97.5%			

²⁰ Nachum Blass, “Developments in the Israeli Education System”, *State of the Nation Report 2010*, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, pp. 203 – 246.

²¹ Number of children attending kindergarten divided by the total number of children in the age group.

When the data is divided by districts (Table 24), we can see that the greatest increase in the number of children aged 6 continuing to attend kindergarten was in the Judea and Samaria district, which as noted previously was the result of a population increase. In the Jerusalem district as well we saw a relatively high increase compared to the other districts.

Table 24 – Kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds and rates of change, by district (Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Year	Total	Jerusalem	Central	Northern	Southern	Tel-Aviv	Haifa	Samaria
2005	17.0	2.3	4.2	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.0	1.1
2010	20.3	3.3	4.7	2.6	3.0	2.8	2.1	1.9
% Change	19.6%	40.6%	12.3%	9.4%	17.0%	15.3%	3.5%	73.0%

When the figures are divided by socioeconomic clusters (Table 25), we can see that the greatest increase in the number of children who remained in kindergarten at the age of 6 was in the lower clusters. In Clusters 9-10 there was even a slight decline in this rate.

Table 25 – Kindergarten attendance among 6-year-olds and the rates of change, according to socioeconomic cluster (Ministry of Education data, in thousands)

Year	Total	Cluster 1-2	Cluster 3-4	Cluster 5-6	Cluster 7-8	Cluster 9-10
2005	16.9	2.0	4.1	6.6	3.9	0.3
2010	20.3	3.4	5.3	7.3	4.0	0.3
% Change	20.0%	71.6%	28.9%	10.3%	2.5%	-1.6%

G. Private preschool attendance

Table 26 presents attendance at private preschools in the years 2000 and 2009, based on CBS figures.

The figures point to several phenomena:

- a. Apparently, the figures are not complete because they refer to, at the most extreme case (2-year-olds) to one-sixth of the entire age group. The solutions for the other children are apparently found within the family, nannies, pre-

nursery playgroups and so on, which are not reported to the Central Bureau of Statistics.

- b. In all age groups, the overwhelming majority of the children attending private preschools are Jewish; a fact which is understandable given the higher economic capabilities of families in the Jewish sector.
- c. The attendance at private preschools declines with the rise in age; particularly, there are fundamental differences between the private preschool attendance rates in the 2-3 age groups compared to the 4-5 age groups.
- d. Despite the partial implementation of the Compulsory Education Law among the 3-4 age groups, the number of children in these age groups who attend private preschools increased much more rapidly than the growth rate of age group. We have no convincing explanation for this phenomenon.

Table 26 – Private preschool attendance among 2-5-year-olds (CBS data, in thousands) and the rates of change

Age	Year	Total	Jews	Arabs	Jews (percent)	Arabs (percent)
2	2000	10.8	10.6	0.2	98.4%	1.6%
	2009	25.6	24.8	0.8	96.9%	3.1%
	% Change	137.2%	133.7%	346.3%		
3	2000	9.0	8.7	0.3	96.2%	3.8%
	2009	16.8	15.2	1.6	90.5%	9.5%
	% Change	86.0%	75.0%	362.5%		
4	2000	3.5	3.2	0.3	91.0%	9.0%
	2009	6.3	5.6	0.7	88.9%	11.1%
	% Change	77.7%	73.6%	119.1%		
5	2000	1.0	1.0	0.1	94.5%	5.5%
	2009	1.8	1.8	-	100.0%	0.0%
	% Change	74.7%	84.8%	-100.0%		
2-5	2000	24.4	23.5	0.9	96.3%	3.7%
	2009	50.4	47.3	3.1	93.9%	6.1%
	% Change	107.0%	101.8%	243.6%		

This may be the place to also address the demand made in the framework of the social protest to expand the Free Compulsory Education Law, so that it would apply to all children from the age of 3 months. This refers to three age groups that together total about half a million children, who are currently not covered by any education law.

The cost of including these children in the framework of the services provided by the State is much higher than the cost for the 3-5 age groups, as in early childhood education the number of infants and toddlers per caretaker is much lower than the number of children per preschool teacher. The differences in the number of children per employee in these age groups are much greater than the possible wage differences between preschool teachers and nannies.

Even if we assume that we are dealing with the same ratio of children per education employees in both age groups, and even if we ignore the issues of construction of daycare centers and the training of caretakers, we are dealing with 15,000 to 20,000 new preschools, with the cost of every preschool standing at NIS 250,000 at least, as previously noted. That is, the overall cost would amount to between NIS 3.73 to 5 billion. If we were to make even more realistic assumptions, we are dealing with a sum that is twice as large, at least. These are clearly the maximum figures because not all parents would wish to put their children in daycare outside of their homes at these ages. At this time there is no possibility of estimating how many parents would truly be interested in such a service. Another question is whether we are referring to a half a day or to an extended school day, in which case the expenses would of course be much higher. In any case, it is important to note that at this time no country in the world provides such service to its citizens.

Appendix 1: Annual figures

**Table 1.1 – The number of children attending public preschools, ages 3-6
(thousands)**

Year	CBS Data	Ministry of Education Data	Difference
2000	284.9	284.3	0.6
2001	311.8	300.6	11.1
2002	334.4	309.6	24.9
2003	362.9	324.7	38.2
2004	347.2	334.1	13.0
2005	359.9	339.5	20.4
2006	349.8	346.6	3.2
2007	372.8	352.2	20.7
2008	371.1	361.6	9.5
2009	391.6	374.9	16.7

Table 1.2 – Public preschool attendance rates, 3-year-olds

year	Total	Jews	Arabs
2000	55.2%	64.9%	31.9%
2001	58.8%	67.3%	39.1%
2002	59.9%	67.3%	42.6%
2003	59.1%	64.5%	46.7%
2004	64.4%	69.2%	53.5%
2005	61.8%	64.3%	55.8%
2006	59.6%	61.6%	54.6%
2007	63.6%	66.4%	56.4%
2008	62.3%	64.2%	57.1%
2009	63.9%	66.0%	58.1%
2010	64.8%	67.0%	58.5%

Table 1.3 – Public preschool attendance rates, 4-year-olds

year	Total	Jews	Arabs
2000	75.8%	90.1%	42.0%
2001	78.4%	90.6%	49.1%
2002	78.0%	90.3%	49.2%
2003	82.2%	91.8%	59.9%
2004	80.1%	89.1%	59.3%
2005	82.7%	91.4%	63.0%
2006	81.0%	87.6%	65.4%
2007	79.4%	86.0%	62.8%
2008	83.1%	89.8%	66.2%
2009	83.7%	90.2%	66.5%
2010	82.0%	87.8%	66.0%

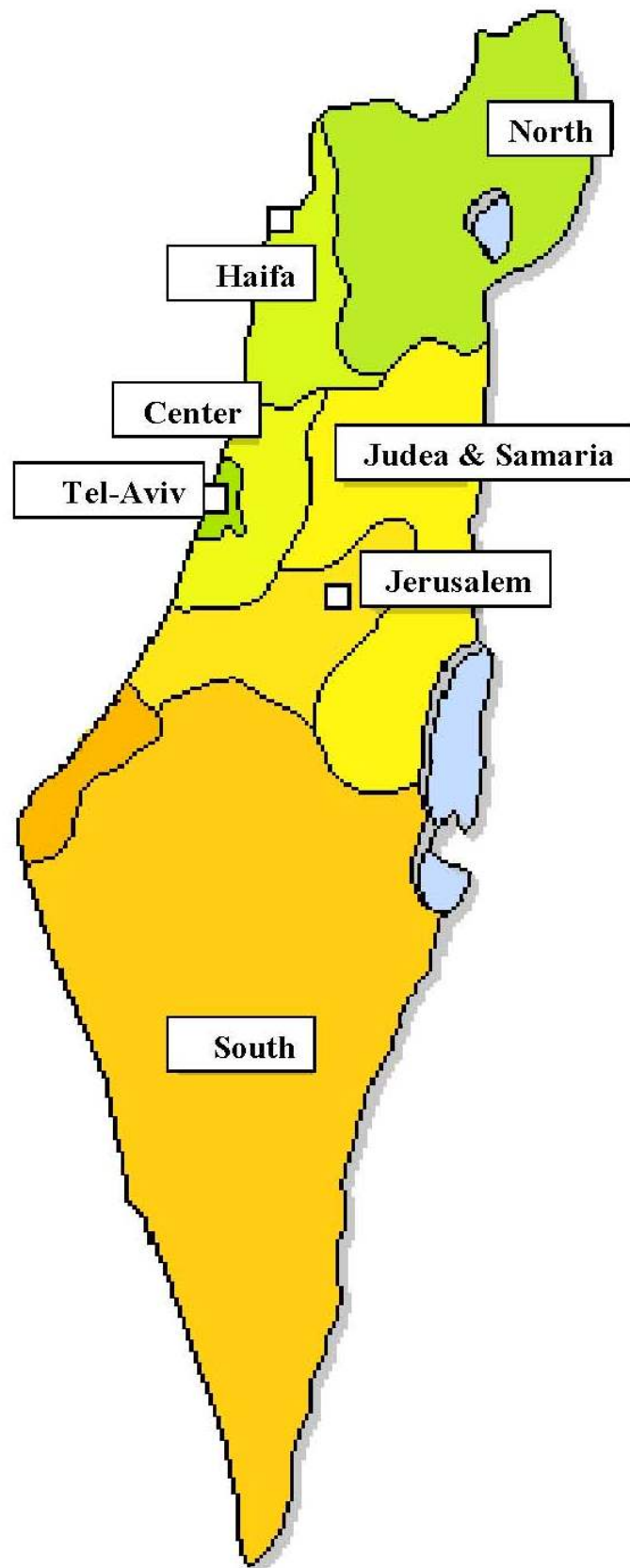
Table 1.4 – Public kindergarten attendance rates, 5-year-olds

year	Total	Jews	Arabs
2000	93.6%	102.6%	73.6%
2001	91.5%	96.5%	79.7%
2002	93.0%	97.8%	81.3%
2003	91.7%	96.9%	79.6%
2004	93.4%	98.3%	82.0%
2005	91.6%	96.6%	80.1%
2006	94.6%	99.7%	82.9%
2007	92.3%	95.3%	85.4%
2008	91.6%	94.0%	85.6%
2009	95.4%	98.1%	88.6%
2010	95.9%	98.3%	89.3%

Table 1.5 – Public kindergarten attendance rates, 6-year-olds

year	Total	Jews	Arabs
2000	14.1%	18.3%	4.2%
2001	14.8%	19.0%	5.5%
2002	12.6%	16.8%	2.6%
2003	14.6%	18.7%	4.9%
2004	11.9%	16.3%	1.8%
2005	13.0%	17.1%	3.3%
2006	14.5%	18.5%	5.3%
2007	13.0%	17.4%	2.9%
2008	14.5%	18.4%	5.1%
2009	15.8%	19.5%	6.6%
2010	14.1%	17.9%	4.2%

Appendix 2: District map



Chapter 4: Teacher training

This chapter will describe the various early childhood (preschool) teacher training institutions. We will discuss the Ariav Model, which changed the nature of teacher training in Israel, and among other things the training of preschool teachers. We will discuss the fact that parallel to the core studies created by the new model – that stand at the heart of every teacher qualification program and are specifically designed for preschool teachers – every institution has the freedom to build its own training program while emphasizing its unique character and philosophy. This freedom encourages diversity and differentiation among the various training programs and allows students to choose an approach that is suited to them. The chapter is based on interviews with heads of the early childhood studies program at five teacher qualification colleges: a State-religious college, an Arab sector college, and three State colleges in three different cities. In addition, we also interviewed two key figures in the Ministry of Education and another key figure who engaged in outlining the policy that led to the reform in the teacher training system. Here too, we maintain our pledge to the interviewees to keep their details confidential, and, therefore, in several places later in the chapter we will note that the information is based on the interviews, without providing the interviewee's name, role or college. The chapter is also based on various official documents, such as the Ariav Committee report and documents appearing on the website of the teacher training branch in the Ministry of Education.

A. Teacher training in Israel

Israel is home to 55 colleges for training teaching staff in all sectors. In addition, there are two colleges for training teaching staff for work abroad – one for the Independent education system and another for the State-religious education system. Yet another college, the *Mofet* Institute, is mostly designated for the professional development of instructors for the institutions for training teaching staff. The breakdown of the 55 colleges is as follows: 32 for the Independent education stream (including two considered State-religious but designated for the ultra-Orthodox population only); nine for the State-religious education system; and, 14 for the State education system. Three colleges are designated for the Arab sector and three other State colleges –Beit Berl College, David Yellin College and Kaye College – offer special programs for the

Arab sector (in the first two colleges) and for the Bedouin sector (in Kaye College).¹ In terms of the national distribution, out of the 23 colleges for State and State-religion education, five colleges are in the Jerusalem district (only one of them in the State education system and the rest in the State-religious education system), eight are in the northern district and Haifa (including one in the State-religious education system, three that are designated for the Arab sector and four in the State education system), seven are in the central district and Tel-Aviv (including three in the State-religious education system and four in the State education system), and three in the southern district (two in the State education system and one in the State-religious education system). Of all the colleges in the State and State-religious education system, **only 19 offer early childhood studies programs.**

The breakdown in terms of the number of students is as follows: overall, in the 2010-2011 school year, 8,222 first-year students attended teacher training colleges in the State and State-religious sector, including 5,662 regular students and 2,560 university graduates studying towards a teacher's certificate. Some 51 percent of all the students studied at the State education colleges, 28 percent studied at the State-religious colleges, and 21 percent studied in the State-Arab colleges. We know that in the State colleges, some of the students belong to the State-religious and Arab sector. Out of all the students in the class, 15 percent studied in early childhood studies programs and three percent studied in the special education program for preschool teachers.

The teacher training branch in the Ministry of Education budgets all institutions that train teaching and educational staff and oversees them. We are referring to all the academic institutions in the State, State-religious and Arab sector that grant a B.Ed. degree and some of those which also grant M.Ed. and M.Teach degrees, as well as to institutions in the ultra-Orthodox sector. The curricula of the academic colleges are formulated in line with the Ariav Model, a guiding plan approved by the Council for Higher Education. The curricula are examined by the Teaching Staff Qualification Branch and by the Council for Higher Education, and are approved by the Council for Higher Education. The studies include education and teaching studies, specialization

¹In the website of the teaching staff training branch in the Ministry of Education, in the specification of the colleges that each supervisory body is responsible for colleges offering programs for the Arab and Bedouin sector are noted. These colleges are: Gordon College, Achva College and Ohalo College. The colleges themselves make no mention of this in the details of the studies that they offer. The only two State-Jewish colleges that offer specific programs for the Arab and Bedouin sector in early childhood studies are Beit Berl and Kaye College.

subjects, and hands-on experience in teaching, as well as core and enrichment studies. They are studied in an integrated manner during the four years of instruction, resulting in a first degree in teaching and a teaching certificate. Each teacher in their first year of work, which is usually the fourth year of studies at the college, must do a teaching internship, participate in support workshops at the college, and participate in a constructive and a final evaluation for the purpose of receiving a permit to teach.

The colleges' academic structure, administration, their academic institutions, their internal requirements for their faculty composition and academic activities are also according to guidelines of the Council for Higher Education. With respect to the teacher training colleges, the Ministry of Education serves as the planning, budgeting and monitoring body (similar to the Planning and Budgeting Committee) and awards teaching certificates and permits. Since the Ministry of Education holds this position rather than the Planning and Budgeting Committee (henceforth, PBC) in the Council for Higher Education – which fulfills this function for all the higher education institutions in Israel that are not teacher colleges – it enables the Ministry of Education to do the following: (1) Respond to the changing needs in the field in terms of curricula and teaching strategy quickly and with flexibility; (2) Ensure a sufficient number of teaching training students, while regulating and channeling them to programs and specializations in line with the system's needs; (3) Maintain tight mutual links between the schools and the training institutions on diverse issues.

The teaching staff training branch maintains seven supervisors – holding six full-time jobs – who are its representatives in the teacher training colleges. Each supervisor is responsible for 4-19 colleges in the various sectors. The supervision is not intensive and the supervisors do not visit the colleges regularly. The Ministry of Education checks that the colleges' adhere to and maintain admission requirements for the students and the qualification certificates issued to their graduates. That is, the monitoring is mostly undertaken with respect to the quality of those entering the education system. In legal terms, there are differences in the monitoring of the colleges in accordance with the sector they are a part of: the Ministry of Education's authority to oversee colleges in the ultra-Orthodox sector is full, as authorized by the National Education Order (Torah Study Facilities for Teachers and Preschool

Teachers), 1958.² The Council for Higher Education Law, 1958, which limits the supervisory capacity of the Ministry of Education, does not apply to the colleges in the ultra-Orthodox sector because they are not academic institutions. The supervision of colleges from the State-religious sector is also stricter because the State Education Law, 1953, allows for it. Clause 34, sub-clause 2 of the law asserts that the minister will set regulations regarding “supervision arrangements of the State-religious educational institutions and the appointment of their supervisors, directors and teachers, and the implementation of the Council for Religious Education’s right to present teacher, director and supervisor candidates, disqualify them from continuing to serve and object to these appointments for religious reasons.” This authorized the Ministry of Education to undertake stricter supervision, especially with respect to the religious observance level of those entering the State-religious education system.

Why are teacher training institutions under the Ministry of Education’s supervision, unlike all other academic institutions in Israel? The interviews we held showed that for the colleges this is an unwanted leftover and an anomaly from the period when the colleges were seminaries. More than 30 years have passed since then and colleges are now also under the supervision of the Council for Higher Education. The colleges view the Ministry of Education’s involvement as intervention that limits their academic and administrative freedom. For its part, the Ministry of Education honors the institutions’ autonomy but is unwilling to give up the supervision and monitoring role as it views teaching as a profession with a public obligation that must be monitored closely. The Ministry of Education, through the Pedagogic Secretariat, examines the compatibility of the curricula at the colleges to the education system in terms of need and relevance. It also verifies that teacher colleges only engage in the training of teachers, development of teachers and training to ancillary professions – that is, paramedical professions – and not in training for other, non-relevant (to teaching) professions. A Ministry of Education representative is also a member of the Council for Higher Education, where the supervision mostly pertains to academic aspects.

The Ministry of Education is not only responsible for the contents being studied, the planning and the monitoring, but also for the budgeting of teacher colleges. The

² For the full text of the law see the following link: <http://www.fridmanwork.com/lawyers1469.html>.

budgeting rules are not identical for academic colleges and for ultra-Orthodox colleges, yet in both cases the budgeting is per student, with the Ministry of Education determining the number of students each institution is allowed to admit. In this way, the Ministry can regulate the number of students. When there is a shortage of teachers or preschool teachers, the Ministry of Education can raise the number of students through inducements and incentives such as conditional loan assistance to those who commit to entering the profession.

The funding of the colleges is from two main sources: the budgeting which the Ministry of Education transfers to them for each student; and the student tuition fees. A few colleges also have external funding sources from fundraising.

In 2011, a joint decision was taken by the Ministry of Education and by the Council for Higher Education along with the PBC whereby academic education colleges will be allowed to shift to the PBC's responsibility.³ This move was among the recommendations of the Dovrat Commission.⁴ The rationale behind the decision is the desire to improve the academic quality of the academic education colleges and their organizational and administrative structure, among other things, by uniting and merging various colleges. The colleges' shift to the responsibility of the PBC will not remove the Ministry of Education from the picture; the Ministry will cease to control budgeting and will continue to be a party to the academic planning and supervision in the fields of education and teaching. College budgets, which will be under the responsibility of the PBC, will be transferred from the Ministry's Teacher Qualification Branch to the PBC, and from there to the colleges. The cooperation with the Ministry of Education stems from the fact that the Ministry seeks to continue its involvement in training teachers in Israel and ensure that their training will be appropriate in the various subject matters and on the levels required by the Ministry of Education. However, the PBC will set the conditions which the academic education colleges will be required to adhere to in order to make the shift and come under its responsibility, as is customary in the other institutions under its supervision. As of May 2011, there were seven education colleges in various phases of working towards

³ To read the full document pertaining to this decision, see the following link: <http://cms.education.gov.il/EducationCMS/Units/HachsharatOvdeyHoraa/Hozrim/MismachMalag.htm>.

⁴ The National Task Force for the Advancement of Education in Israel (Dovrat Commission), the national education plan, January 2005, pp. 138-9.

the process of unification and shifting over to the PBC in the framework of four different moves.

Institutions that are interested in shifting to the responsibility of the PBC must conform to several conditions, in order to ensure the institutions' academic quality and financial viability. These conditions are as follows: (1) A preliminary step of merging with a general college, university or another academic college of education. (2) The minimum size of the academic institution must be some 2,200 students with a future target of reaching a total enrollment of some 2,500 students. (3) The institutions must operate in line with the organizational, legal and budgetary rules of the PBC with respect to institutions under its responsibility.

The admission requirements of students in teacher training colleges are determined by the Teaching Staff Qualification Branch in the Ministry of Education. We can assume this will also be the case with respect to the colleges that will later shift to the responsibility of the PBC, because as noted, the Ministry of Education will continue its involvement in all issues pertaining to planning and monitoring, but not budgeting. We should note that this constitutes a deviation from what is customary for academic institutions in Israel and also infringes to some extent on the academic freedom of these institutions. Every year, the branch informs all colleges of the admission requirements for the coming school year, and the colleges must act in accordance with these instructions. In March 2011, the branch publicized the admission requirements for the 2011-2012 school year – there was no change in them from the previous year. However, in the 2009-2010 school year, admission requirements were lower and the combined grade required was 500. The current admission requirements require candidates to take Israel's psychometric exams and hold a full matriculation certificate. In addition, candidates are also supposed to have an admissions interview. Admission to studies is based on a combined grade (psychometric plus matriculation average) of at least 525, with a minimum score on the psychometric exam of 475 and a minimum matriculation score of 85. Candidates whose psychometric score is lower than the minimum, even if their combined grade is higher than 525, as well as those whose matriculation grade average is below 85, even if their combined grade is above 525, will only be accepted within the quota of exceptional cases. The college is permitted to accept students with a combined grade of less than 525 based on specific criteria determined by it, as long as the candidates are entitled to a matriculation

certificate and their combined score is not lower than 485. These students can only constitute 12 percent of the total first-year student class. On the recommendation of the Dean, the college can accept additional students with a combined score of less than 485 with a matriculation certificate. These students can be no more than three percent of the total first-year student class. Overall, the number of students with a combined score of less than 525 will not constitute more than 15 percent of the number of first-year students accepted to the college in question. The objective here is to enable the college to take in candidates who do not meet the formal admission requirements but who are highly suitable for the teaching profession, like: candidates with educational, administrative, instructional, or leadership experience and those with a proven moral, social and voluntarism commitment. In the early childhood studies program and in the primary school program, the colleges can accept candidates with a matriculation score that is 92 and above without requiring them to take the psychometric exams, on condition that these programs do not include the special education program or the special education specialization. The program for distinguished teachers will take in candidates with a combined score of 630. Candidates in colleges where the language of instruction is Hebrew, who will choose to take the psychometric exam in a language other than Hebrew, will be required to take a Hebrew language test (the *YAEL* test) and achieve a score of 125 and above. University graduates with at least a first degree are exempt from the psychometric exams. The required average in the first degree is at least 75. Candidates with a first degree in the fields of natural sciences, life sciences and exact sciences are required to present an average grade of at least 70 in the first degree. Candidates with an academic degree who have not worked in the education system for at least two years will be registered as regular students in the second or third year of study.

Candidates for studies in Arab sector colleges and programs are required, in addition to the other admission requirements, to have a score of at least 70 in Arabic on their matriculation certificate (with at least 3 units of study). Moreover, they are required to take an Arabic-language entry exam and get a score of at least 75. The candidates for the colleges where the language of instruction is Arabic take the Arabic-language psychometric exams. In this context it is important to note that in Arab sector colleges and in programs designated for the Arab and Bedouin colleges in State-Jewish colleges, studies are not always in Arabic and some of the classes are given in

Hebrew. This stems from the fact that the college staff includes both Arab and Jewish lecturers.

In the 2010-2011 school year, seven percent of all the new regular students (first year) at teacher training colleges had a combined score that was lower than 499 and nine percent had a combined score in the 500-524 range (that is, overall some 16 percent of students were below the minimum requirement). Some 59 percent had a combined score in the 525-599 range, and 25 percent had a combined score above 600.

The Ministry of Education's supervision system also plays a role in training early childhood teachers. The colleges work closely with the Ministry of Education's supervision system in order to assign the students to preschools for hands-on training as part of their practical experience. Before bringing a student into the preschool, consultations are undertaken to obtain the supervisor's approval of the preschools. The Ministry of Education's supervisors are the ones who make the decision on whether to approve the students as preschool teachers at the end of their internship. A graduate receives a teaching certificate only with the supervisor's approval. The supervisors may also advise the college regarding its curricula, yet they do not have the authority to determine what will be included in the curricula.

B. The Ariav Model

The Ariav Committee, headed by Professor Tamar Ariav, convened in May 2005 on behalf of the Council for Higher Education for the purpose of facilitating a reform of Israel's colleges for training teachers and educational staff. Professor Pnina Klein's committee, on the initiative of the National Academy of Sciences, worked on its report parallel to the Ariav Committee, beginning in February 2005 and for some two years. The Klein Committee report – "From Research to Practice in Early Childhood Education" – was submitted in 2007 and was published a year later, in 2008. As noted in the interviews, although the Klein report was only submitted after the Ariav report, the committee's work and its recommendations – which were formulated at that point already – were a guiding principle for the Council for Higher Education and the Ariav Committee during their work on the new model. Professor Klein appeared before the Ariav Committee and her position was taken into consideration. One of the recommendations issued by the Klein Committee pertained to the training of educational staff working with the early childhood age group: "Only professionals

with appropriate academic training will work with children in the early childhood age group. Their training will include the acquisition of current knowledge in the area of child development and in the subject matter they will be teaching. Strict screening of teaching candidates is recommended, also in terms of their personal suitability to the job.”

The committee’s additional recommendations were as follows:

- (a) Significantly decrease the number of children in preschool classes (that is, ages 3-6) and the number of children in first grade, in order to maintain a suitable ratio between the number of children and the number of adults.
- (b) Ensure the quality of interaction between teacher and pupil. To that end, preschool teachers, school teachers and other staff members must be trained to maintain high-quality interactions with the children, identify the interaction’s components, assess them, and improve them.
- (c) Lay the foundation for cultivating literacy in the fields of reading, writing and math in preschool, yet not through formal teaching. Be sure to cultivate conversational language skills and conduct activities in the arts.
- (d) Identify as soon as possible children facing developmental-environmental risks, children with special needs, and children with special skills and high motivation in order to provide them with suitable educational programs.
- (e) Promote research and development that focus on early childhood.⁵

The Klein Committee’s recommendations were reflected, as we will see, in the Ariav Committee report regarding the quality of training for early childhood teachers and the specific contents it should comprise.

The rationale for establishing the Ariav Committee was broad, and included the following reasons: (a) The previous model, “The Guiding Model for Training Teachers” dated from the early 1980s, and therefore the Council for Higher Education and Ministry of Education decided to reexamine it. The aim of the old model was to “academize” preschool teacher training, and hence teaching seminaries were turned

⁵ Klein, Pnina and Yaacov Yablon (eds)(2008) *From Research to Practice in Early Childhood Education*, Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, pp. 1-2.

into colleges that offered an academic curriculum. The curriculum comprised long teaching hours –formally, 108 course hours, yet in practice 120-130 hours, twice as much as a regular first degree of 60 course hours. In the view of the Council for Higher Education this constituted an unreasonable amount of course hours, which necessarily comes at the expense of quality of studies. In addition, in the 1990s the Ministry of Education ordered an internship in the fourth year of studies at college. The burden of studies combined with the internship requirement posed a great difficulty for teaching students. It also constituted an economic burden for the colleges, which were budgeted per student and not according to course hours, thereby resulting in their financial collapse. (b) Aside from the need to change the curriculum at colleges, another necessity was to fundamentally change the old model in line with current thinking on what constitutes good teacher training. (c) The implementation of the Dovrat Commission recommendation to build a curriculum for training teachers at universities on the basis of a first degree (60 course hours) and a teaching certificate (12-14 course hours) – some 72 course hours overall – made the gap between teacher training programs (but not preschool teachers, who were always trained at colleges only) in universities and the parallel programs in colleges unreasonable (72 course hours at universities compared to 108 hours or more at colleges). The decision was to formulate a new curriculum that would obligate both the universities and the colleges to follow a single model. For the universities this meant extending the scope of studies, while for the colleges it meant cutting back. (d) Expanding the accessibility to higher education turned the first degree, which once was a sought-after degree, into one that is more easily acquired. The Committee’s aim was to make the first degree in teaching training more attractive and also to stress the phases to follow the first degree, prompting university graduates to undertake a career change to teaching and a second degree, M.Ed., and the new degree – M.Teach.

The Ariav Committee published its decisions in November 2006 under the title “Guidelines for Teacher Training at Israel’s Higher Education Institutions.”⁶ In the committee’s view, teaching is a complex profession and hence acquiring the know-how and capacity to become a teacher is a complex and gradual process. As it is impossible to provide all the required essential knowledge to the future teacher in the

⁶ The full committee report can be seen in the following link:
http://cms.education.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/0D75DE48-FC6C-4723-B853-80866FDD0C0C/89475/211106_1708.pdf.

framework of the initial training, the training program has to be focused and basic, with additional aspects of knowledge and skills to be studied during the teacher's internship period and over the course of his or her work. The committee believed that there is a shared core of studies in teacher training that cuts across age groups and teaching professions, and that this core should be part of the curriculum for all programs. Alongside the core studies, there should also be studies relevant to specific age groups and teaching subject matter. The committee believed that the teacher training field is academic in every way, and therefore attached importance to maintaining research activity at the teacher training institutions, as recommended by the Klein Committee as well. By proposing the guidelines, the Ariav Committee believed that these should be flexible enough to reflect each institution's educational outlook and academic independence while allowing it to develop unique and diverse teacher training programs.

The main new features in the model are as follow:

- (a) **Improving the quality of teachers** who graduate the training programs by attracting high-quality candidates, setting uniform admission and graduation requirements, and strengthening the professional side of teachers and preschool teachers.
- (b) **Adapting teacher training to the current trends in developed countries** by strengthening core studies; developing an integrative format for teacher training before the emergence of a new academic second degree (M.Teach); ensuring the academic quality of training programs through Council for Higher Education monitoring; setting up-to-date criteria for pedagogical studies similar to other professions (determining the scope of required studies, setting a binding studies structure for each age group and defining essential core studies shared by all frameworks); and stressing the place of hands-on experience.
- (c) **Strengthening the status of teacher training within Israel's higher education system** through the creation of uniform models for all frameworks dealing with teacher training; structuring a four-year studies framework for a first degree in teaching with a teaching certificate; granting academic validity to teaching certification studies for university graduates; and setting the

minimum requirements for training institutions based on Council for Higher Education policy with respect to staff, curricula structure and infrastructure.

In line with the Ariav Model, teacher training turned into professional training, built on a first degree and teaching certification. The first degree consists of 60 course hours. The teaching certificate encompasses half a degree (half of a double major) and this means a full major of teaching studies. In addition there are also core and enrichment studies – a Ministry of Education requirement for colleges only, consisting of 6-12 course hours. The basic studies include: English, language of instruction, computer literacy, and culture and national heritage studies. Overall the level of studies stands at 90-96 course hours. In formulating their curriculum, the colleges can “play with” the number of hours in each component within the program, yet ultimately they cannot drop below the minimum 90 hours or go beyond the maximum 96 hours.

The committee defined a “basic model” which is, in fact, the teaching major, consisting of 30 course hours. All teacher training programs, with the exception of the post-primary age group, must include these studies, which are divided into two components: teaching and education studies (15-21 course hours); and hands-on experience (9-15 course hours). Education and teaching studies must include the following components: (a) education studies (at least 4 course hours); (b) pedagogy and methodology in teaching a subject (at least 4 course hours); (c) research literacy in education and teaching (at least 2 course hours). The hands-on experience is integrated into the academic degree studies from the first to the third year, with the fourth year being the internship year. The hands-on work is usually undertaken once a week, for five hours. The committee’s aim was for students to experience a year of work at daycare centers and private preschools for the 0-3 age group, a year of work in pre-compulsory preschool for the 3-4 age group, and a year of work in the compulsory kindergartens for children aged 5.

In addressing early childhood teacher training, the committee made a significant change (a true revolution according to some of our interviewees) and redefined the age range preschool teachers are trained to work with. Previously, preschool teachers were qualified for work with 3-8-year-olds (including first and second grade level); the committee changed the age range to 0-6-years-old. The significance of this is that

preschool teacher training no longer involves training for teaching first and second grade, although some colleges offer the option for extended studies (an additional 12 course hours and a hands-on experience component) in order to also receive a teaching certificate for first and second grades. On the other hand, the qualification program starts to address the youngest age range, 0-3-years-old, which is not part of the preschool education system. Some of the colleges allow students to extend their studies and be qualified as special education preschool teachers. According to the new position, the graduate is first and foremost a preschool teacher, albeit one who has specialized in special education or in teaching first and second grades. For the Ministry of Education, the implication of the change in the age range addressed by the preschool teacher training process is the preparation of an infrastructure that would allow for the application of the Ministry of Education's responsibility for the entire age range. The Ministry of Education makes sure that all preschool teachers will be qualified to work with children aged 0-6 so that in the future this will not be the factor that prevents the transfer of the daycare center and pre-nurseries branch from the ITL Ministry to the Ministry of Education.

Just like the rest of the training programs, the training program of preschool teachers changed. According to the new model, the structure of studies is as follows:

- Teaching major (30-60 course hours)
 - Education studies – 15-21 course hours
 - Hands-on experience – 9-15 course hours
- First degree (52-60 course hours)
 - Early childhood studies major – at least 26 course hours
 - Second major in teaching discipline (two different models) – 26-30 course hours
- Core studies – 6-12 course hours

The committee proposed two models for building the first degree in early childhood studies. Their purpose was to give colleges a measure of freedom in determining their programs. The studies in the program reflect the committee's guidelines that

preschool teachers should not study a smattering of everything, but rather, that they should gain expertise in a specific field. The models are as follows:

(a) Structure for double major degree:

- One major in the field of early childhood studies consisting of at least 26 course hours;
- Second major in a teaching discipline consisting of at least 26 course hours in a core preschool subject area (science, math, language (mother tongue), literature/children's literature, art, music, Bible, culture and national heritage, environmental studies).

(b) Structure for general double major degree:

- One major in the field of early childhood studies consisting of at least 26 course hours;
- Second general major comprising divisions of teaching disciplines in one of two options:
 - o Two divisions from two disciplines consisting of 15 course hours each
 - o Three divisions from three disciplines consisting of 10 course hours each. In this option, one division can be in special education.

The manner in which the degree is built now strengthens the preschool teacher's ability to continue on to a second degree in the early childhood studies major, in various educational fields or in one of their first degree majors. The first model, for a double major degree, is the model which the committee viewed less favorably because it is spread across too many disciplines. The general double major, on the other hand, allows the preschool teacher to gain expertise in specific fields. The colleges can decide which fields of study they offer and how many divisions they allow students to study - two or three. Despite the aspiration for gaining expertise, the committee decided to leave a "remnant" of the previous approach of "a little bit of everything" and require studies in three additional subjects out of the core preschool studies which are not part of the majors. These disciplines, consisting of three course hours each, are taught in the framework of the overall curricula, either as part of the

main studies (the degree) or the major studies. The core subjects are as follows: science, math, language skills (mother tongue), literature/children's literature, art, music, Bible, culture and national heritage, environmental studies. In the State-religious education system, the Bible core studies course is obligatory.

As noted, it is possible to combine studies in the preschool program with the early childhood special education program – at a preschool that integrates special education (ages 0-6) or at a special education preschool (ages 3-6). The curriculum is as follows:

- All the requirements of the regular preschool studies program.
- An additional major in special education at the preschool level consisting of 26 course hours. The preschool teacher training at an integrative preschool will focus on work with children with light to moderate disabilities while the training for a special education preschool will focus on children with moderate to serious disabilities. If the studies are in line with the structure of the general double major degree with the option of three divisions consisting of 10 course hours each, the student teacher can sign up for one special education division and supplement another 16 course hours in special education for a total of 26 course hours.
- 6 course hours of additional hands-on work in an integrative preschool or at a special education preschool.

The overall scope of studies: A minimum of 112 course hours (if the structure is a general double major degree) up to a maximum of 128 course hours.

We noted that the model regulated the issue of teaching certificates for university graduates. Firstly, as of now these are the only certificate studies that are also recognized as an academic degree. The model defines precisely the required supplementary studies. This is a special program of 30 course hours; at times, the supplementation of a major preschool core study is also required.

In the wake of the new guidelines, all the universities and all of the teacher training colleges were required to submit within four years of the report's publication the new training programs they prepared for approval by the Council for Higher Education. This was to be done no later than the 2010-2011 school year. In its application to the

Council for Higher Education, the institution in question was required to detail the program's rationale and vision that stands at its base, its objectives, emphases and planned training targets, the connection between the curriculum and the "basic model's" structure and the core contents it requires, and the program's hands-on experience model. At this time, upon the completion of the 2010-2011 school year, almost all teacher training institutions – in the State and State-religious education system – have received the Council for Higher Education's approval for their new curricula. A few requests from colleges are still being examined at this time. According to the committee's decision, the students who embarked on their studies during the transition period will be able to complete their studies in line with the format adopted until that time. This is the place to note that the model only refers to the teacher training institutions in the State and State-religious education system and not to Independent educational institutions. The reason for this is that the teacher training programs in the Independent education system are not in the framework of academic institutions.

In order to implement the model, a professional accompanying committee on behalf of the Council for Higher Education was established in January 2007, also headed by Professor Tamar Ariav. This committee is accompanying the process of changes at all institutions and at all teaching training frameworks. The committee maintains regular ties with the sub-committee for universities and education colleges at the Council for Higher Education. The committee is comprised of an equal number of representatives from the education colleges and from the universities, with expertise in the fields of education and teaching, as well as a Ministry of Education representative. The committee's roles are to: monitor the implementation of the Ariav Committee report while examining the institutional level of adherence to the new model; continue to examine the various recommendations' compatibility with the requirements based on the committee's report; discuss problems that emerge from the field and make recommendations to the Council for Higher Education on these matters; and also deal with other basic questions as brought before it. The committee was appointed for five years and the need for continuing its work and replacing its members is to be examined at the end of its tenure.

C. Programs for preschool teacher training at teacher training colleges

C.1. Profile of students in the early childhood studies program

The students in the early childhood studies program are mostly female. Very few males study in this program – no more than 15 per year – and even this marks a significant rise compared to past years. As noted in one of the interviews, there is a certain ambivalence regarding men in early childhood education that usually emerges from the “field” rather than from the teaching colleges. Most male graduates open private preschools later on. Overall the students are not of the highest level, either in socioeconomic terms or in terms of scholastic achievements (matriculation and psychometric exams scores). There has been a notable improvement, though, in recent years with the higher admissions requirements.

A high percentage of graduates in the preschool teacher training programs find employment. In the State and State-religious sector there is even a shortage of teachers, which continues to grow, especially in central Israel, in the Gush Dan area and in Jerusalem. The great demand for preschool teachers means that almost every one is able to join the workforce. One of the reasons for this is the decline experienced in the past decade in the rate of Jewish students at national teacher training institutions (in all programs). According to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the number of teachers in the State education system rose by six percent, while the number of students in State teacher training institutions dropped by 24 percent. The number of students at the State-religious teacher training institutions (which has not grown at all) fails to match the rate of growth in the number of teachers in this sector. On the other hand, the growth in the number of students at the ultra-Orthodox teacher training institutions is much greater than the growth in the number of teachers in the ultra-Orthodox system – a rise of 111 percent in the number of students compared to a 65 percent growth in the number of teachers. These figures attest to a great future shortage in teachers and preschool teachers in the State and State-religious sectors and to a future surplus of teachers and preschool teachers in the ultra-Orthodox sector.⁷

⁷ Blass, Nachum (2009). “Israel’s Education System – A Domestic Perspective.” In Dan Ben-David (ed), *State of the Nation Report – Society, Economy and Policy 2009*. Jerusalem: Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, p. 160.

In the Arab sector, fewer than 50 percent of the graduates are hired as preschool teachers. The reason for this is that in the Arab sector there is a great surplus of preschool teachers, in addition to the fact that recognized unofficial educational institutions that are supposed to employ certified preschool teachers do not necessarily do so. This negatively impacts on the employment opportunities of qualified teachers. However, Central Bureau of Statistics figures show that the tendency of Arab students to study at teacher training institutions (as of 2007-2008 Arab students constitute 34 percent of students at academic teacher training institutions) is based on a realistic approach for finding work within Israel's job market. The rate of Arab graduates in teacher training institutions who join the workforce at the end of their first degree studies is the highest among all other first degree graduates (in the social sciences, humanities, and teaching) – that is, some 97 percent of the graduates of teacher training institutions, compared to 90 percent of overall first degree graduates (both Jewish and Arab) and 93 percent of Arab first degree graduates. It is important to note that we are referring to entry into the job market in general and not necessarily in a teaching job. Even if not all teacher college graduates are hired by educational institutions, it still appears that they possess an advantage over other candidates.⁸

Not all Arab students attend State-Arab colleges or programs designated for the Arab and Bedouin sector in the State-Jewish colleges. Some of them prefer to study in a general program at State-Jewish colleges. This may stem from the fact that the level of studies is perceived by them as higher in these colleges or perhaps because they are closer to the students' area of residence. The Arab students encounter two main difficulties: firstly, academic writing in Hebrew; and secondly, the hands-on training at Jewish preschools. The State-Jewish colleges that do not offer a special program for the Arab or Bedouin sector instruct the students towards work in the Jewish State education system and assign all students there, including the Arab ones. This no doubt poses difficulties for both the college and the students. Mixed cities, that are also home to an Arab population, are able to offer solutions to this problem in the form of student teaching positions at bilingual preschools or mixed Arab-Jewish preschools.

⁸ Ibid, p. 161.

Similarly, not all religious students attend State-religious colleges and many of them prefer the State colleges. These students are also trained in the State rather than State-religious education system. Religious preschools teachers who are graduates of State colleges can also work in the State-religious education system. As we were told during an interview in one of the colleges, in the past this required an interview with a rabbi who would “approve” their level of observance, yet today the State-Religious Education Department at the Ministry of Education is more open to taking in religious students who are graduates of State colleges. This may stem from a preschool teacher shortage in the State-religious sector.

In numerical terms there is great difference between the colleges with respect to the number of students studying in the early childhood studies programs. There are larger and smaller colleges. In all colleges whose employees were interviewed, with the exception of the Arab sector college, interviewees noted that in the past two years there has been a rise in enrollment. This may be related to the reform at the teaching colleges (the Ariav Model). The Arab sector college pointed to two reasons for a drop in their enrollment numbers: firstly, the competition against other colleges in the Arab sector; and secondly, the fact that the market appears to be saturated and there is an expectation of difficulty in being hired as a preschool teacher. All the colleges, alongside the programs for regular students, also offer a career change program for university graduates, with studies lasting two years.

C.2. Adapting the college curricula to the Ariav Model

All the colleges that took part in the study received the approval for the new curricula they drafted in accordance with the Ariav Model. All of them have begun to work according to the new model although they continue to teach the senior classes according to the previous curriculum. For the colleges, the Ariav Model fundamentally changed all qualification programs, which were rebuilt in line with the models requirements.

Out of the five colleges whose employees were interviewed, none chose the possibility of a double major degree, but rather, only the general double major degree. Some of them offer two divisions consisting of 15 course hours each, while others offer three divisions consisting of ten course hours each. The most popular disciplines

are: Judaism and Bible, literature, art, sciences, music, language studies (Hebrew or Arabic), math, and special education.

In all colleges, the curricula include all the additional components required by the Ariav Model: core and enrichment studies, hands-on experience, education studies, practical experience, and an early childhood studies class. The colleges have the freedom to decide which courses to teach and at what level; they can also decide what needs to be studied at which phase of the studies. In formulating their curricula, each college can distinguish itself from the others by stressing certain aspects more than others and by highlighting its philosophy through the curriculum. Each college is also allowed to structure the hands-on experience as it sees fit. Mostly this practical experience component begins in the first year, yet one college decided to introduce the hands-on phase only in the second year, with the exception of several concentrated days in the second semester of the first year where students go into preschools accompanied by students from the classes above them. In that same college, the internship component is undertaken twice a week in the second and third years. The hands-on component is also undertaken at daycare centers yet in some of the colleges it is only done for one semester. All the colleges addressed the difficulty in working *vis-à-vis* the ITL ministry and daycare centers, which stems from the fact that the issue has not yet been regulated and that there are insufficient daycare centers and recognized private preschools where students can do their hand-on training.

In all colleges, the fourth year is dedicated to the internship. Some colleges condition the beginning of the internship on completing most of the scholastic coursework. During this year, the students start to work in the education system and receive a mentor from the Ministry of Education. The internship period is under the joint responsibility of the college and Ministry of Education, with the college organizing special workshops, while the Ministry of Education assigns them a mentor. At the end of the period, a Ministry supervisor decides whether to approve the preschool teacher or not. A teacher who fails to receive approval is not entitled to a teaching certificate. An internship does not require working full-time although student teachers must work a minimum of ten weekly hours. Some of the preschool student teachers work as rotating preschool teachers or as preschool teachers at an afternoon childcare facility. The internship criteria are set by the training branch in the Ministry of Education.

Some of the colleges also offer students two options, as permitted by the Ariav Model: (a) an additional teaching certificate in special education for early childhood; (b) extending the qualification to first and second grades. A student can only extend their studies in one of the two fields. The extension of the qualification to first and second grade or to special education is only possible for regular students. Students in the career change program for university graduates are not allowed to extend their qualification beyond the teaching certificate that qualifies them as preschool teachers, because the scope of their studies is limited (50 course hours, with 12 of these hours being hands-on experience) for two years only. The special education teaching certificate for early childhood involves additional studies consisting of up to 26 course hours and appropriate hands-on experience. The scope of the studies depends on what the student studied earlier. Those who choose this program must take some special education major courses. Extending the qualification to first and second grades involves additional studies consisting of 12-26 course hours and appropriate hands-on experience. There are colleges who allow their students to complete their studies, including the extension to first and second grade, in four years, while others require the students interested in extended studies to enroll for a fifth year.

C.3. The variety of early childhood studies programs at teacher training colleges: Differences and similarities

Each college adheres to its own philosophy – a philosophy that it expresses through its curriculum. In the framework of this study, we interviewed the heads of early childhood studies programs at five teacher colleges: three State colleges (which we will refer to here as college A, B, and C), a State-religious college, and an Arab-sector college. As noted, these are five of the 19 colleges that train preschool teachers across the country. Below we will describe how each program director presented the uniqueness in their own training program, in order to show the differences in the philosophy of the different colleges, even though they all use the Ariav Model. The differences are manifested, as noted, also in respect to the courses offered, the divisions available – where each college chooses to emphasize various specialties – in the manner the overall curriculum is built, and in the hands-on experience component and pedagogical accompaniment system. Each college has its own systematic philosophy, yet they all share some basic underlying principles – some of them are even derived from the Ariav Model. These principles are as follows: good

interpersonal communication skills; respect for the children; learning through diverse means and in line with the group of children in question, their developmental level, their age and their cultural background; an ecological perception that views the child as part of a wider whole; the development of conversational skills, reading readiness and math literacy among the children; emphasis on research and reflection; connection between the college work and the field work.

National college A: The training program's aim is to produce preschool teachers who know how to manage early childhood educational frameworks in a manner that ensures the emotional well-being and successful learning of every child. Several major principles stem from this aim:

- (a) Learning principles among children: The training program aims to teach learning principles among children, in order to help them understand how children learn. The college believes in an educational approach that views the dialogue between the child and the adult as a good means of learning, alongside other methods.
- (b) Sound interpersonal communication: A preschool teacher must maintain sound interpersonal relationships with the children, with the staff and with the parents.
- (c) Social justice and equity: The college believes in work in small, permanent and heterogeneous groups. This work method is proper in the school's view because it contributes to better learning and also creates social cohesion and solidarity among the children. Working in heterogeneous groups helps in preventing negative reinforcement of "differentness" from an early age, which creates a low self and social image that a child might have trouble leaving behind. In the view of the college, their students become accustomed to working this way from their first year. This work method is most possible in the parts of the day where formal learning takes place, while during playtime the preschool teacher must utilize more indirect methods to work with the children.

- (d) Coherence in the curriculum: The program must possess inner logic, with a connection between the courses themselves and between the courses and the “field.”
- (e) Reflection: The students learn the reflective practice. They learn to go deeper and analyze various issues through their own hands-on experience.
- (f) Educational work that is compatible with development: The training program is built in line with the approach that asserts that a preschool curriculum should be adapted to the children who attend the preschool, to the culture they come from and to their age.
- (g) Developing language among children: It has been proven that children with high-level language skills show better scholastic accomplishments. The socioeconomic and educational level of the parents affects the children’s language ability and creates gaps between them. Hence, cultivating language skills from a young age in this education framework constitutes a social agenda. The students pay close attention to children’s literature, as repeated reading of children’s books in regular and heterogeneous groups is the basis for enriching the vocabulary of children.
- (h) The relationship between the college and “the field:” The College attaches great importance to close ties with the field, that is, the instructing preschool teachers, the Ministry of Education’s supervision system, and the local authority.

National college B: The program stresses several major aspects:

- (a) Learning about children from children: Emphasizing the students’ ability to observe children and learn about their abilities. The students learn how to observe children, document what goes on and think about it critically. This is accompanied by theoretical studies of educational approaches.
- (b) Professional development: The aim is to send to preschools a graduate who is skilled in interpersonal communication with children, and who knows how to adapt the activity to the child’s level of development and needs. The graduate

will also show reflective thinking. The college also works on students' ability to undertake independent research.

- (c) Educational leadership and social involvement: Encouraging the students to do this by interweaving it through the college's curriculum
- (d) In-depth understanding of educational-therapeutic principles and especially the approach of teaching compatibility with development.
- (e) Emphasis on children's ways of expression: The doctrine is that children learn and express themselves in a variety of ways, such as play, creativity, music, movement, and plastic art. This issue is deeply interwoven in the entire curriculum and hands-on experience.
- (f) The development of academic literacy skills among children: The students learn how to develop children's readiness for reading, spoken language and pretend-games.
- (g) Familiarity with culture and heritage which the learning at preschool revolves around (the Jewish annual cycle).

National college C: The training philosophy stems from the assumption that there must be compatibility between the training of students and the preschool educational objectives. In the view of the college, the educational objective is the encouragement and cultivation of learning and the development of each and every child. This cultivation is undertaken through the creation of an interesting educational environment that is challenging and adapted to the individual differences on the one hand, and to the group as a whole on the other hand. The assumption is that an educational environment that encourages learning and development and that promotes curiosity and learning in a democratic and tolerant atmosphere with respect for others provides a suitable base for the child's adaptation to society in the future. The notion of educational environment not only includes the group of children but also refers to other systems that affect child development and welfare, such as the cultural community, the family and connection with the parents, the staff working at the preschool, and the relationship with community services.

The college aspires to produce the type of preschool teacher who:

- (a) Possesses knowledge in various educational approaches and is able to adapt them to the needs of different population groups and to diverse individual needs. A teacher who possesses a wealth of knowledge, both theoretical and practical, in the field of early childhood education and development.
- (b) Understands the complexity of the work in an educational framework and is able to create positive interactions, organize activities, set a daily agenda and organize a physical space that encourages activity and learning, in areas such as language development, computers and other technological means.
- (c) Encourages creativity, problem solving, self-learning and autonomy.
- (d) Has a familiarity with and understands the uniqueness of each and every child and the factors that influence behavior, and who knows how to spot indications that could point to the child being at-risk. Their educators have the ability to work sensitively with children and respect their desires, culture and difficulties.
- (e) Has the ability to work sensitively and in cooperation with parents and co-workers.
- (f) Is able to analyze complex situations and take the proper decisions.
- (g) Aspires to keep learning and developing, who recognizes the profession's importance and who is willing to work in order to elevate its status.

The State-religious college: The curriculum at the college is based on the State-religious philosophy on Torah studies and Jewish law. This is manifested in various areas:

- (a) The teaching staff, in all areas, includes only teachers with a suitable background and sympathy with the State-religious sector, because in the view of the college, beyond the academic learning there is also learning through the atmosphere created in the preschool.
- (b) The college requires the students to tour the country, based on a philosophical view endorsing Zionism and love for the Greater Land of Israel.

- (c) Beyond the formal curriculum there are other contents that are informal: lectures, concerts and shows, as well as a program of seminar days that stresses the teacher and preschool teacher's role as an educator with a social obligation. The seminars pertain to issues such as poverty, family crises, drugs and sexual abuse. These are issues that are not necessarily addressed in the framework of the formal curriculum. The seminar days give students tools, raise their awareness and shape them as religious educators.

The college also especially emphasizes two more issues:

- (a) The importance of play among children
- (b) The investigative approach: The college trains the students to engage in investigation at the preschool – to encourage children to ask questions regarding things that are of interest to them and allow them to play a role in the decision on how to answer the question.

Arab-sector college: The college is unique in several ways that pertain to its philosophy, to the image of the preschool teacher and to its relationship to the work in the field:

- (a) The preschool teacher who leaves the college must be humane, believe in respecting the child's world, believe in the quality of his or her relationship with the child in his early years, be familiar with the importance of communication with the child regarding his or her development in various areas, and see the development of the child's potential as the supreme objective.
- (b) The college aspires to develop a preschool teacher with broad interdisciplinary knowledge, a learning and investigating approach, possessing reflective thinking skills and the ability to adapt to a dynamic and changing environment.
- (c) The college mostly serves the needs of the Arab education system. Hence, the curriculum is suitable for the Arab sector and the hands-on experience is only at Arab sector preschools, and the Arabic language is studied in depth.

D. Criticism of the preschool education system that emerged in the interviews with early childhood studies program directors at the teacher colleges

In the course of the interviews, the early childhood studies program directors at the colleges criticized the preschool education system in Israel in several ways. Some of the criticism pertains to structural issues while other aspects pertain to value issues:

D.1. Structural criticism:

- (1) Inequality in education: The fact that the compulsory education law from age 3 is currently only partially implemented creates intolerable gaps between children, in line with the frameworks their parents can afford. The unequal parental fees further widen the gaps.
- (2) The problematic nature of the early childhood education system's split between the ITL Ministry and Ministry of Education: Despite the contemporary doctrine of "turning the pyramid upside down" and perceiving education in the earliest age group (0-3) as highly important in shaping the child's future, the fact that the education system for these ages is not under the Ministry of Education's responsibility but under the ITL Ministry's responsibility is highly problematic. The argument is that those who work with young children must work towards gaining expertise, yet the manpower working with the 0-3 age group is unprofessional, working long hours at very low wages. The Ariav Model aims to qualify teachers for working with children from birth to the age of 6, based on the perception that a child is not born at the age of 3 and that future preschool teachers must be familiar with the manner of a child's development until the age of 3. The colleges have trouble working with education frameworks for the 0-3 age group for technical reasons (the difficulty inherent in coordinating with the ITL Ministry, the daycare centers and the private preschools; a shortage of frameworks that can take in students for hands-on practice) and also for ethical and educational reasons (an aspiration to only work with the public system, based on a desire to strengthen it, alongside the shortage in frameworks). There is a need to regulate the colleges' working relationship with the ITL Ministry and private preschools.

- (3) Difficulty in training Arab sector preschool teachers: There is a particular problem with the hands-on experience component. In the Arab sector there are very few supervised daycare centers and it is difficult to train students for work with the 0-3 age group. The practical experience at preschools is also problematic because a significant part of the preschools belong to associations from the recognized unofficial stream. These preschools are under the Ministry of Education's responsibility, yet as was noted in Chapter 2 there is a serious problem with the supervision of this stream especially in the Arab and Bedouin sector. The manner in which the preschool education system is built in this sector poses great difficulty with respect to the hands-on experience of students in the Arab and Bedouin sector.
- (4) An excessively high number of children in preschool classes: The high number of children at preschools prompts children to compete for the preschool teachers' attention with many other children. Lowering the number would significantly improve the children's quality of education, much more so than any educational program or new equipment. The argument is that it would have been preferable for the Ministry of Education to promote this issue and invest resources in it, as this would provide the best response to the child's genuine needs.

D.2. Criticism of the values expressed:

- (1) Neutralizing the autonomy of preschool teachers in the field: The Ministry of Education dictates a standard curriculum at preschools. The various core programs were prepared by different teams in different periods and were based on varying pedagogical perceptions, without being based on a cohesive educational approach. The preschool teachers in the field do not always understand the principles at the core of the programs and the programs are not always suitable for children in a given preschool. The argument is that preschool teachers in the field should be granted more autonomy and allowed to build educational programs on their own that are suitable to the children in their preschool, or to at least be allowed to exercise more judgment with respect to the manner of translating the programs into practice. The supervisory system, which is in the form of the representative of the Ministry

of Education in the field, does not grant preschool teachers enough autonomy with respect to the curriculum.

- (2) The “over-academization” of the preschool parallel to the minimization of playtime and creative time: The tendency to “academize” the preschools, which stresses the preparation of a base for cultivating literacy in the fields of reading, writing and math is a move promoted by the Ministry of Education, and reinforced by the Klein committee and by the Ariav Model. The colleges do not object to this yet express criticism over the fact that over-emphasizing this area significantly undermines the time dedicated to play and creativity. Playtime in early childhood carries great importance and casting it aside in favor of academic studies undermines the development of children and their tendency to love learning. Free time, without too much guidance by the teachers, is also vital for child development. The colleges encourage the rising trend in the Ministry of Education at this time, to view early childhood studies as a separate unit of reference from primary education. This trend is reflected both in changing the training program for preschool teachers which currently focuses on the 0-6 age range only, and in cutting down the young divisions at schools.
- (3) A gap between the educational outlook of the teacher’s colleges and the outlook adopted in the field: A teacher’s college can educate the future preschool teacher on the basis of many principles – social justice, democracy, an investigative approach, the importance of play, various means of expression, learning that is compatible with development, and so on. However, once the students reach the hands-on phase, the internship and the regular work at the preschool, they encounter the educational outlook of the preschool teachers in the field that are not always compatible with those promoted by the college. The power and influence of the field is very strong and at times undermines the introduction of new educational approaches. This could have been improved through a tighter relationship between the colleges and the preschool teachers in the field, with the mediation of the Ministry of Education’s supervision system. The supervision system is important in this respect and the relationship between it and the colleges is highly significant. The supervision system’s mediation between the college and the preschools

that offer training affects the hands-on experience and the quality of the graduates who later enter the education system. The relationship with the colleges can contribute greatly to the veteran preschool teachers in the field as well, and this resource should be utilized.

Chapter 5: Teaching manpower

In this chapter we shall present the developments pertaining to teaching manpower in the past decade. The figures available to us are from the Ministry of Education; their disadvantage is that they lack information about teachers in the ultra-Orthodox sector.

Figures 1 and 2 present the trends in relation to the number of kindergarten teachers in the Jewish sector by seniority level. Figures 3 and 4 present the same trends in the Arab sector. The graphs highlight several prominent phenomena. For example, in the Jewish sector we can see that the manpower is rather experienced on the one hand (most kindergarten teachers have more than 15 years of experience), yet on the other hand, the figures point to a stagnation of the teaching manpower, as reflected in the decline in the relative share of kindergarten teachers possessing 5-14 years of experience.

Figure 1. Number of kindergarten teachers by seniority, Jewish sector

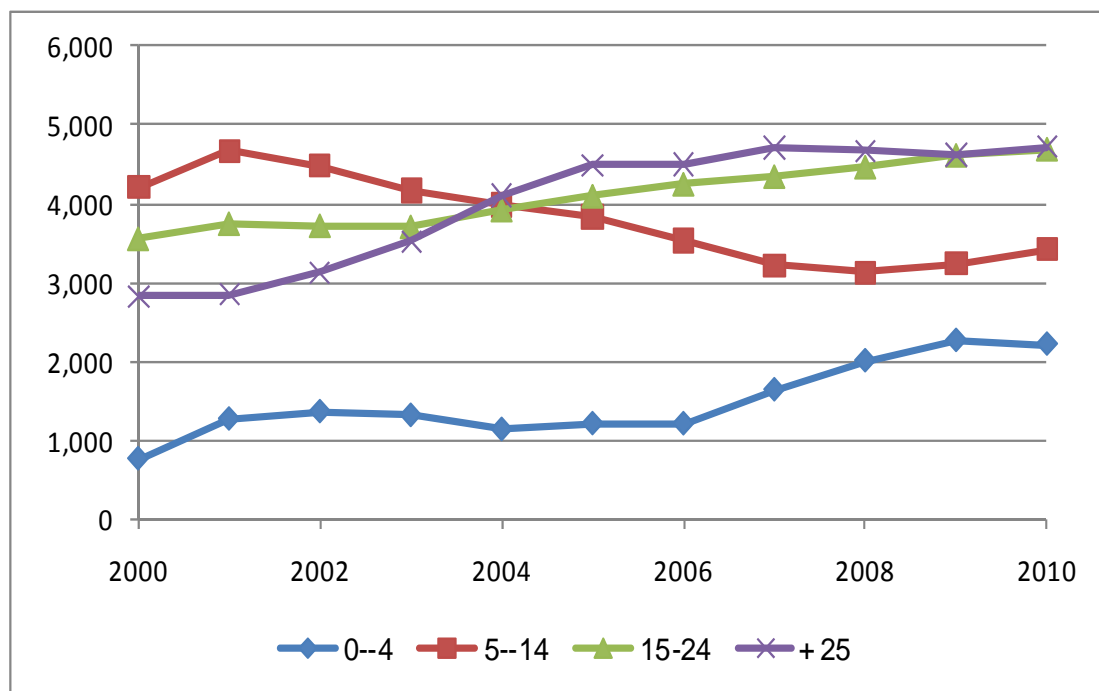


Figure 2. Distribution of kindergarten teachers by seniority, Jewish sector

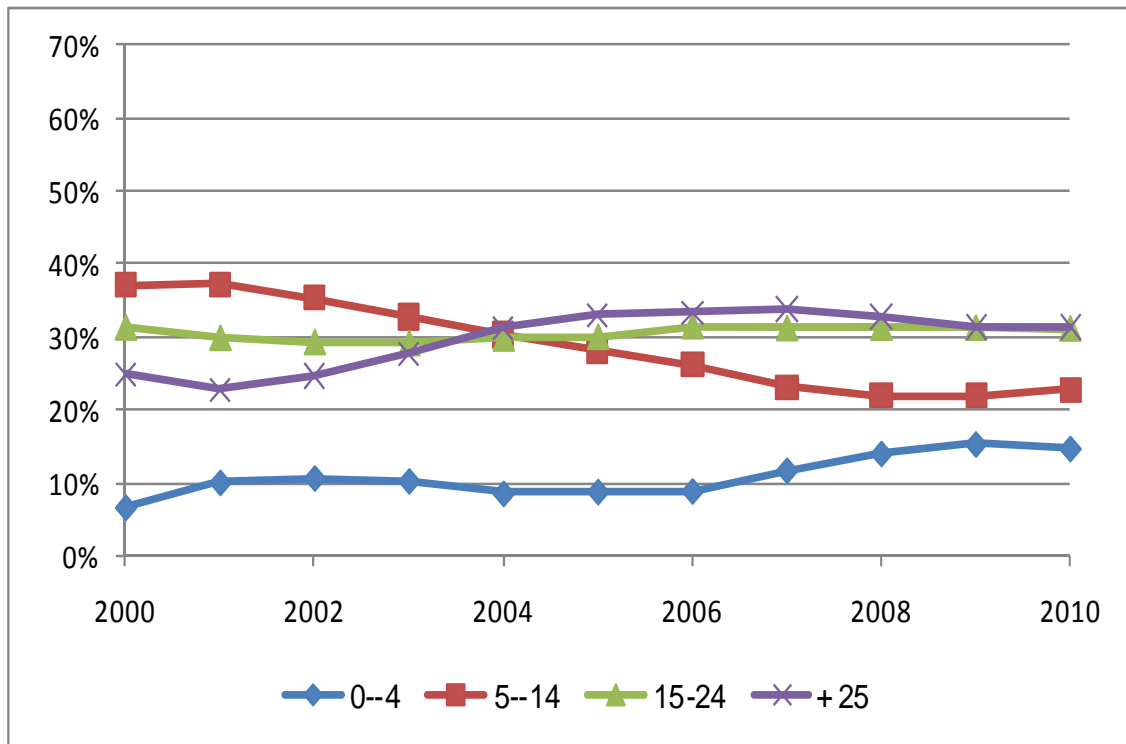


Figure 3. Number of kindergarten teachers by seniority, Arab sector

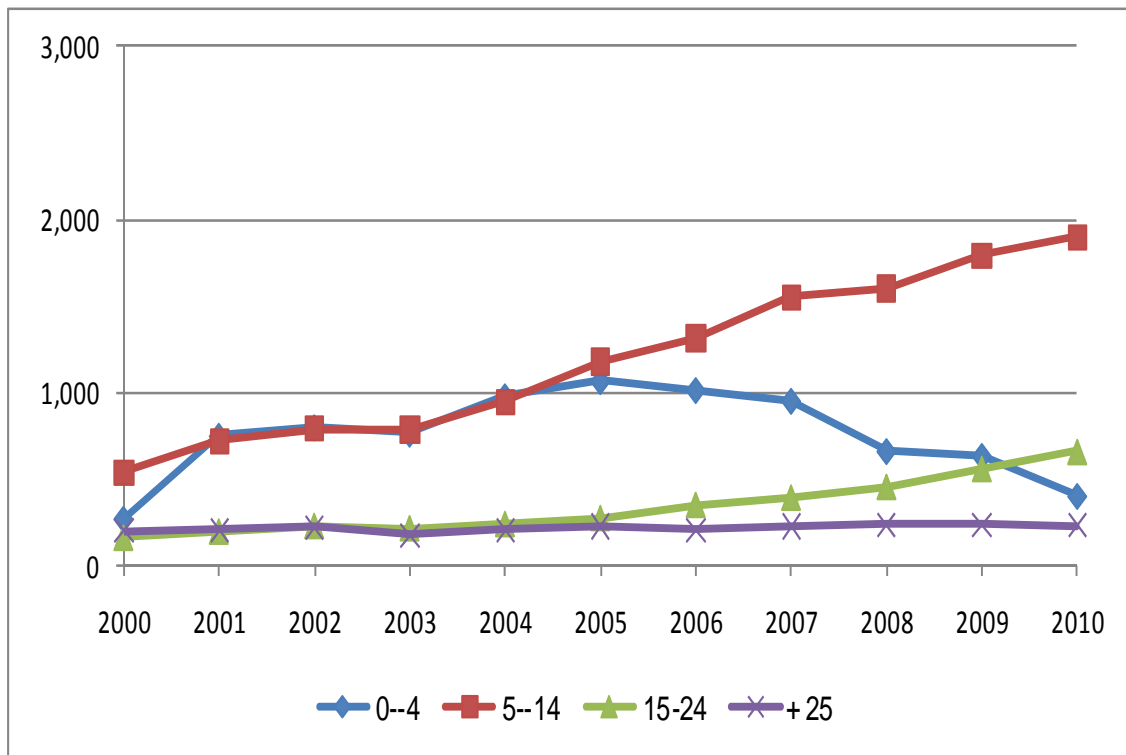
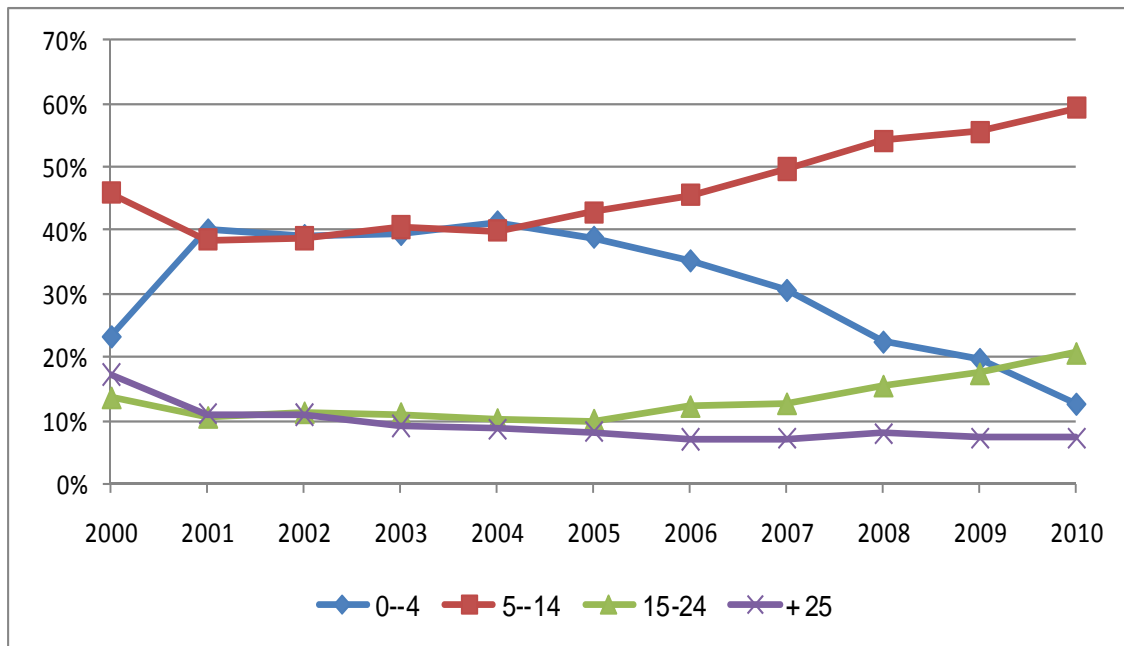


Figure 4. Distribution of kindergarten teachers by seniority, Arab sector



The figures in the Arab sector point to a correspondence between the growth in the number of students and the rise in the number of kindergarten teachers. The significant rise in the number of children who have started to attend kindergarten took place mostly between the years 2000 and 2005. Indeed, as can be seen in figures 3 and 4, the education system was committed to the recruitment of manpower in order to meet the new demand for preschool services in the Arab sector in those years. In the second half of the decade, in light of the more limited growth in the number of children attending kindergarten, we can see that the number of young kindergarten teachers in the system shifted to a declining trend, with employment at preschools mostly consisting of more experienced kindergarten teachers.

Figures 5 and 6 present the trends pertaining to the number of kindergarten teachers in the Jewish sector by education. Figures 7 and 8 present the same trends in the Arab sector. The figures reflect the acceleration in the “acadamization” process of kindergarten teachers in the past decade. Today, some 60 percent of kindergarten teachers in the Jewish sector hold a first degree and another ten percent or so hold a second degree. This is quite different from the picture at the beginning of the decade, when the relative share of kindergarten teachers with an academic degree stood at roughly 30 percent. As in Figure 2, we saw that most kindergarten teachers are

veterans, and we can assume that a significant number of teachers acquired their higher education after they started working.

Figure 5. Number of kindergarten teachers by education, Jewish sector

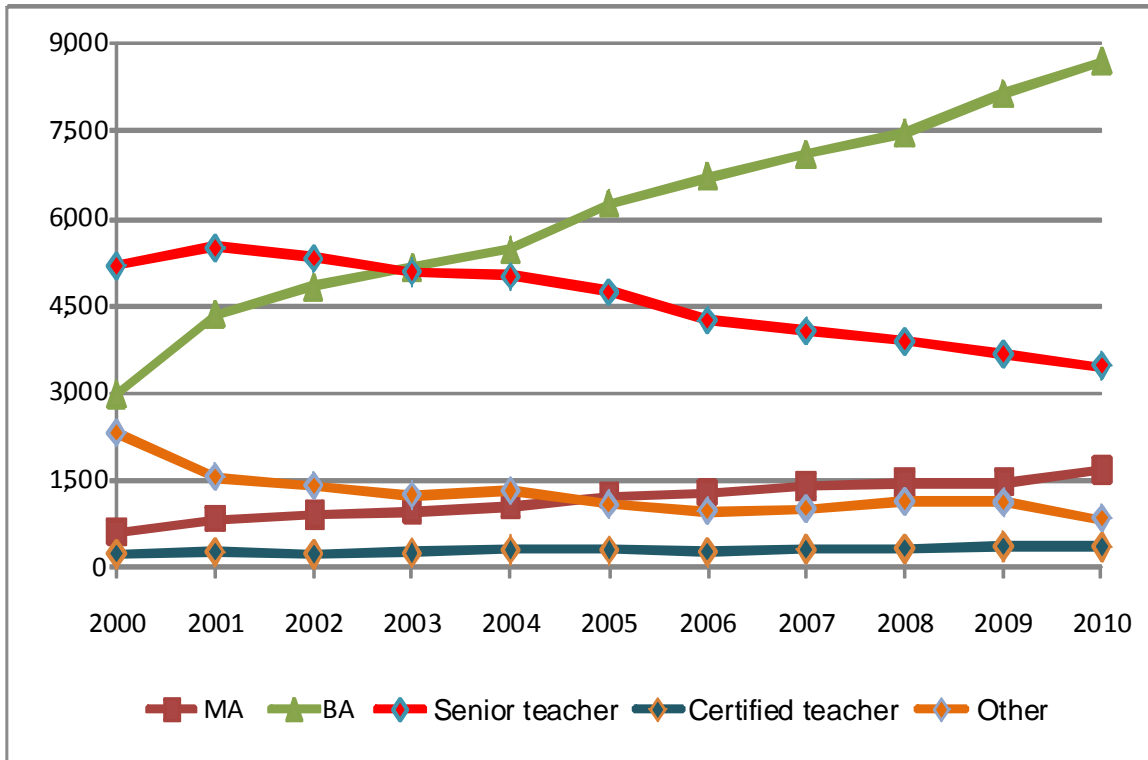


Figure 6. Distribution of kindergarten teachers by education, Jewish sector

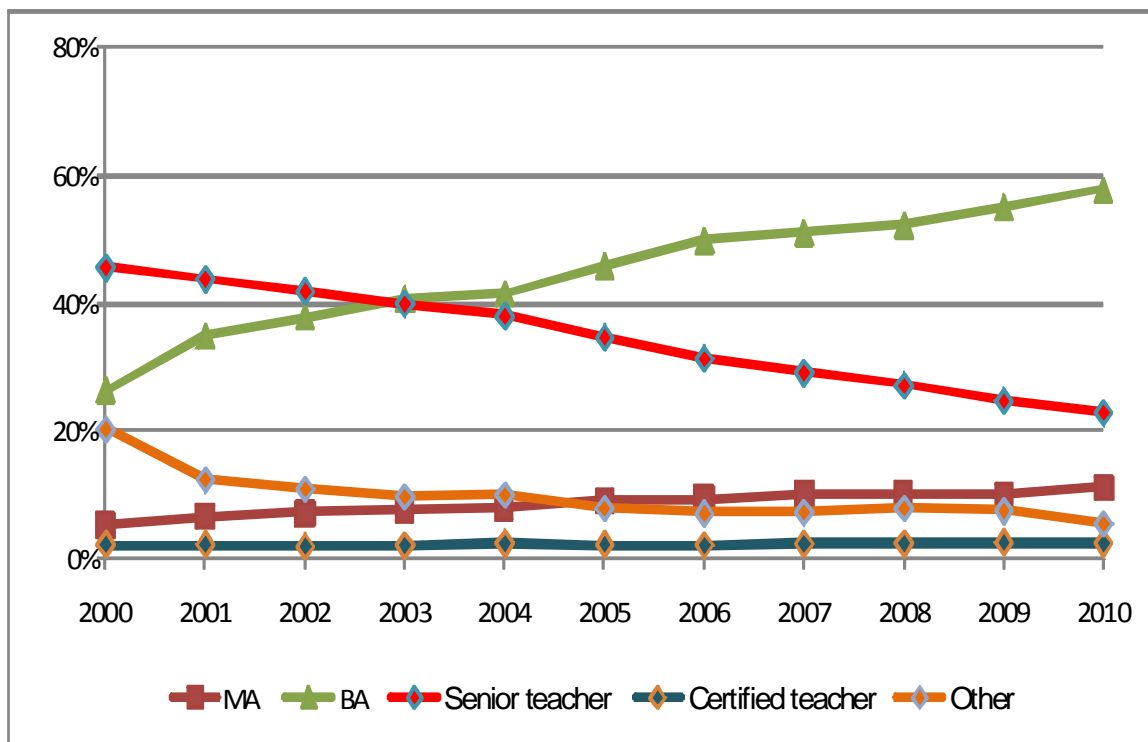


Figure 7. Number of kindergarten teachers by education, Arab sector

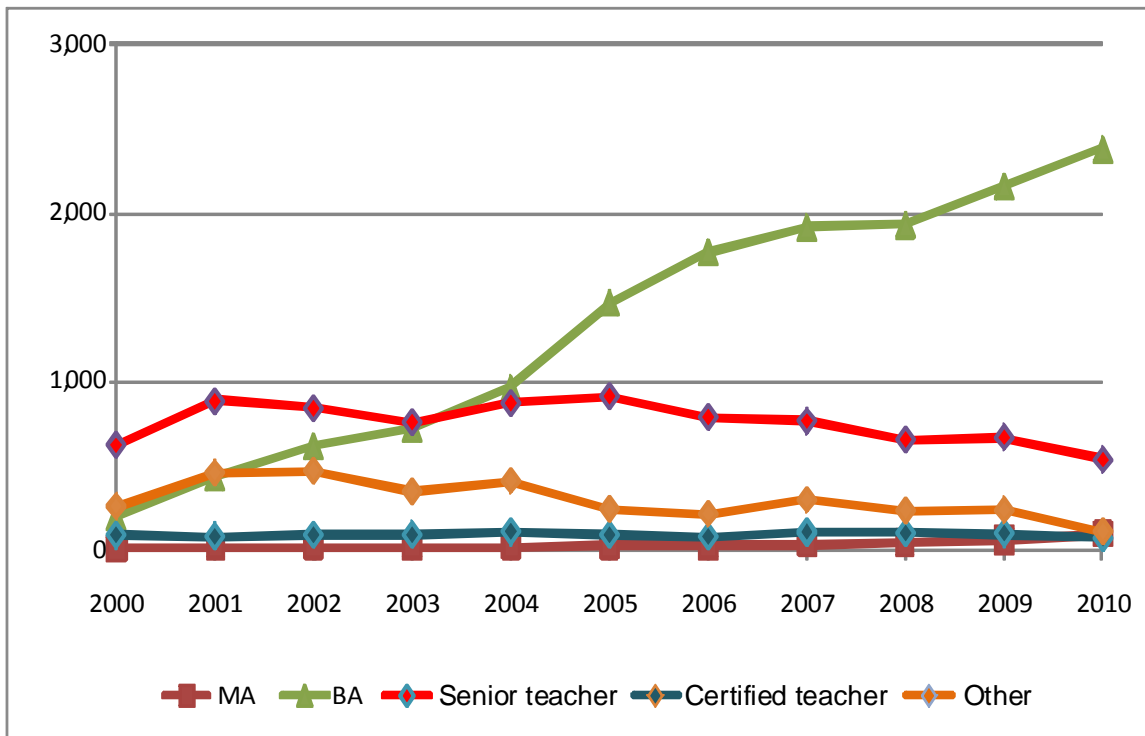
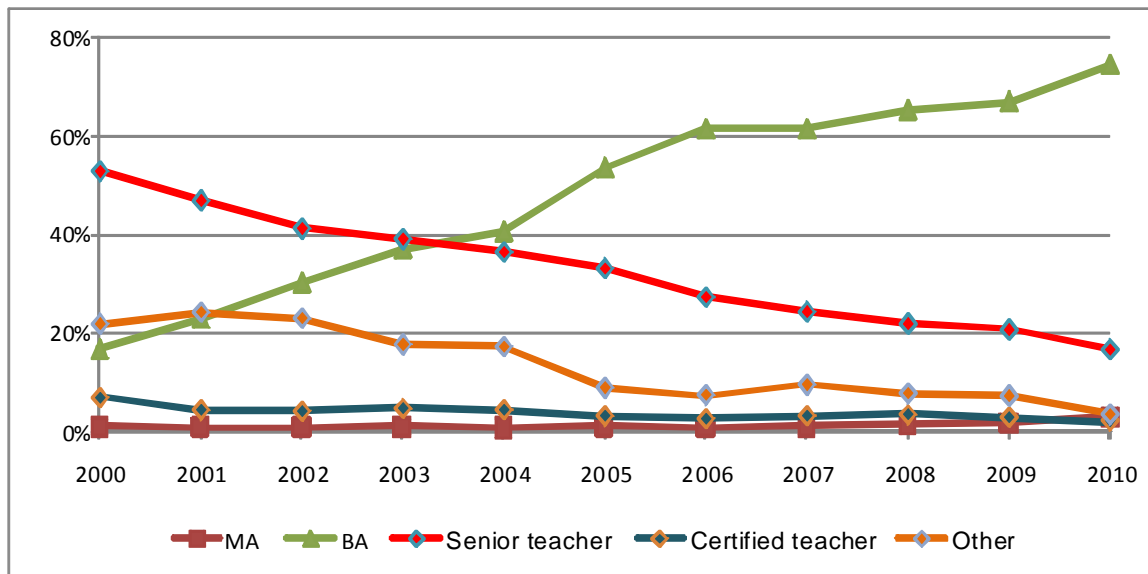


Figure 8. Distribution of kindergarten teachers by education, Arab sector



The figures on developments pertaining to education among the teaching manpower at Arab sector kindergartens over the past decade attest to similar trends to the ones seen in the Jewish sector. Despite this, we can say that the “acadamization” process was much more significant in the Arab sector. For example, at the beginning of the

decade the relative share of kindergarten teachers holding an academic degree stood at some 20 percent in the Arab sector (compared to roughly 30 percent in the Jewish sector). Today, some 80 percent of kindergarten teachers in the Arab sector hold an academic degree – almost all of them hold a first degree, while only a small minority of them holds a second degree.