Eid Diala Abu-Oksa
ORCID 0000-0003-0997-2802

Student of Israel

THE ARAB EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ISRAEL: CHALLENGES AND CHANGES

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While the Arab minority in Israel has suffered greatly from war events and political definition of the state, its education system has experienced rapid development since the state's establishment until today. The partial improvement in the level of education of Arab children and youth is evident in qualitative and quantitative indices, as well as in the level of infrastructure of the Arab education system. Nevertheless, socio-economic gaps between Arab and Jewish children and youth continue to exist, and it is apparent that the rate of improvement does not keep pace with the growing needs of Arab society in the field of education. In the last decade, the government has adopted a series of five-year plans for the socio-economic development of Arab minority. However, there is a significant gap between Arab education and Hebrew education in important indicators, such as financial investment per pupil, infrastructure (buildings and classrooms), educational frameworks outside the school hours, and the rate of entitlement to matriculation.
At the beginning of the eighth decade of the State of Israel, the real challenge of the Arab education system in Israel is not necessarily quantitative, but qualitative. The more formal and informal educational programs in the Arab educational system will be adapted to the culture of the children and youth integrated into it, the more Arab society will be able to realize its human potential.

Key words: Education in Israel, Arab Palestinian Minority, Jewish Arab Education, Palestinian Minority Complexity

Introduction

The conditions of the Arab minority in Israel, and its educational system, has been neglected in the academic research, especially in the western platforms and publications of such research. This is unfortunate since the story of this minority, and its adaptation to major historic events in the Middle East in general, and inside Israel in specific, can be of major value to our understan-

ding of minority education systems in a reality of conflict between the state and its national minority.

This minority and its story, some suggest, may hold the keys to possible important lessons to be learned from the Middle Eastern national conflict, and by such to the abilities of minorities around the world to keep their social-cultural identity under severe circumstances.

Therefor the article will introduce and discuss the complexity and uniqueness of the Arab educational system inside the Israeli state, by examining its social, historical and political contexts. At the same time, it will focus on important aspects that have been shaping its development and continuous change in the past decades, including issues concerning to infrastructure and budget, educational policies and informal education system of the Arab educational system in Israel.

Why is the status of the Arab citizens of Israel so unique?

To understand the Arab educational system in Israel, first of all one should understand the historical and social complexity and uniqueness of the Arab society in Israel.

In 1948 the state of Israel was established, the Arab-Palestinian population lost more than 80% of its members, due to war crimes, depopulation and migration from tens of cities and villages inside the current borders of Israel. That minority remaining within the newly established borders numbered a mere 156,000.[1] Latest statistical numbers from September 2017 indicate that the Arab society is 20.9% of Israel's population and that it is divided to 83.8% Muslims, 8.4% Christians and 8.2% Druze.[2]

As a result, the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel were a former majority that became a minority in its own land overnight. Unlike many other minorities around the world, the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel are a minority of natives, not a minority of immigrants.[3]

Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel mostly live in separate towns and villages, while some 10% live in mixed Jewish-Arab towns such as the city of Haifa. Generally they identify their cultural and national identity as Palestinians and part of the Arab nation, yet they are at the same time officially citizens of a country that is in conflict with members of its own people, the Palestinian

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[1] R. Khamaise (Ed), *Arab society in Israel* (3), *Population, society, economy*, Jerusalem 2009; I. Pappé, *The forgotten Palestinians: A history of the Palestinians in Israel*, New Haven 2011.

[2] Central Bureau of Statistics 2018.

[3] B. Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian refugee's problem, 1947-1949*, Tel Aviv 1991; I. Pappé, *The forgotten Palestinians.*

people in the neighboring West Bank and Gaza regions, and with the Arab nations.[4] This conflict started from the moment that the state was officially defined as a Jewish state and not as a solely democratic state for all its citizens, a definition that still produces conflict over the rights of the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel.[5]

The Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel's identity is collective and its composed from four elements:

1. Citizenship (Israeli).
2. Nationality (Palestinian).
3. Ethnicity (Arab).
4. Religion (Islamic, Christian or Druze).

This mix of those components causes an identity dilemma that keeps changing when circumstances change,[6] and it creates a various and multi-dimensional discourse in topics that are related to "multiculturalism", "ethnic democracy" and Palestinian indigenousness" and so on.[7] In fact, due to this situation many Arabs in Israel share the belief that the development of a Palestinian society in Israel is not a natural development, but simply the product of a crisis.[8]

Although the Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel minority is the state's largest minority[9] still, the Arab population suffers from discriminatory government policies and it is deprived in almost all domains[10] for example:

– Politically: Arabs in Israel have not managed to turn their demographic proportion into political power.

– Economically: they constitute 53% of the population that remain below the poverty line (National Insurance Institute of Israel, "poverty Report", 2006).

– Vocationally: Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel find it more difficult to enter the Israeli job market – only 6% of civil services and government employees are Arabs,[11] and most security-related jobs are closed to them.[12]

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[4] L. Abu-Lughod, *Foreword*, [in:] *Displaced at home: Ethnicity and gender among Palestinians in Israel*, Eds. R.A. Kanaaneh, I. Nusair, New York 2010.

[5] N. Rouhana, *Identities in conflict: Palestinian citizens in an ethnic Jewish state*, New Haven 1997.

[6] K. Diab, M. Mi'ari, *Collective identity and readiness for social relations with Jews among Palestinian Arab students at the David Yellin Teacher Training College in Israel*, Intercultural Education, 2007, 18(5), p. 427-444.

[7] Y. Yona, Y. Shenhav, *What is multiculturalism*, Tel Aviv 2005, p. 28.

[8] L. Abu-Lughod, *Foreword*, [in:] *Displaced at home*; A. Ghanem, N. Rouhana, *Citizenship and the parliamentary politics of minorities in an ethnic state: The Palestinian citizens in Israel*, Nationalism and Ethnic Politics, 2001, 7(1), p. 66-86.

[9] Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018.

[10] R. Suleiman, *Perception of the minority's collective identity and voting behavior: The case of Palestinians in Israel*, Journal of Social Psychology, 2002, 142(6), p. 753-766.

[11] S. Dichter (Ed.), *Monitoring civic equality between Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel*, Sikkuy Report, Jersusalem 2003-2004.

[12] R. Khamaise (Ed.), *Arab society in Israel*.

– While the Israeli Ministry of Education expects the Arab education system to educate students according to the Jewish State's values, Palestinian Arab society expects its schools to educate its children according to Palestinian Arab national-cultural values.[13]

The educational system in the Arab society

Arab education in Israel reflects the internal struggles taking place in this society: tradition versus modernism, Israeli versus Palestinian, and secular versus religious. Furthermore, this society endures internal quarrels and struggles where conflicts are often linked to faith. In the past, the Arab society was characterized by a traditional religious quality; there were neither absolute secularists nor fundamentalists. All of them lived in relative peace in a consensual traditional lifestyle. However, over the last decades, the conditions have changed owing to advances in media and communication technology. Global and regional unrest, cultural disputes, and coverage of conflicts among different elements of the Israeli society now reach every household. Discrimination on religious grounds implies a different attitude toward others based on religious convictions. A chain of local and regional events in recent decades affected the Arab society in Israel, resulting in regrettable violent incidents in various mixed-population towns and villages. As educational system is a social institution influencing attitudes, behavioral patterns, and recognition of other persons, it plays a significant role in bringing cultural and social changes, influencing the stratified structure in Israeli society, including the Arab society.[14] Children of the Israeli Arab minority group attend schools in which the medium of instruction, including the study materials, is Arabic. In large towns where the minority population is diverse, students have a choice of schools. Pupils from the Muslem community usually attend state educational institutions, while a significant percentage of the Christian pupils attend schools run by various churches/schools of the Alliance network, under the auspices of the French Ministry of Culture

The level of education is one of the most accepted indicators of the level of modernization and development of a human society. Education is a significant milestone in one's individual life, enabling a person to realize his abilities, to shape a worldview, to build social awareness and to help make

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[13] K. Arar, F. Ibrahim, *Education for national identity: Arab school principals and teacher dilemmas and coping strategies*, Journal of Education Policy, 2016, 31(6).

[14] A. Yogev, *Approaches to moral education in a pluralistic society*, [in:] *Junction: Values in education in Israeli society*, Eds. I. Iram, S. Shkolnikov, I. Cohen, A. Schechter, Jerusalem 2001, p. 355-379.

decisions in the personal and professional spheres. Providing education and learning to the population enables the state to improve and realize its human potential. The education policy in Israel aspires to impart knowledge and skills, to expand the circle of students at all levels of education, to reduce dropout among students and to raise the level of education in the general population.

Most Arabs live in separate localities, but they are in constant contact with the Jewish population through their work, trade and higher education.

Arab school students compromise approximately 27% of the country's school students. Throughout their schooling, from elementary to high school, Arab and Jewish students primarily attend separate schools. The language of instruction in the Arab education system in Israel is Arabic (Arabic is the second formal language in Israel).

The educational system in Israel is a centralized system administered through the Ministry of Education. Among the main responsibilities of the ministry are the development of curricula, the supervision of teachers, and the construction of school buildings. Local municipalities are primarily responsible for the maintenance of school buildings and their equipment.

The level of education in Arab society has significantly increased in the country's history to the present day. In September 1949, the First Knesset enacted the Compulsory Education Law, which established compulsory education for grades 1 through 8. In 1969, the mandatory period was extended until the end of the tenth grade, and in 2007 a compulsory period of study was established until the end of 12th grade. In the past five decades, the average years of education in the Arab population raised from 1.2 in the early 1960s to 12.0 in 2015. This is an even more impressive improvement than that of the Jewish population – from 8.4 to 13.0 in the period under review (Statistical Abstract of Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics website). The improvement in student achievement in the Arab education system is quantitative and qualitative. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics indicate that in the years 2000-2016, the number of pupils in Arab post-primary education doubled from 101,000 in the 1999/90 school year to 197,000 in the 2011 school year, inter alia due to the introduction of the Compulsory Education Law up to twelfth grade. 96% is a very high rate compared to the corresponding rate of growth in the Hebrew secondary education system (from 470,000 to 516 thousand in the period under review – an increase of 9.8% In the last two decades). The rate of entitlement to a matriculation certificate for those who completed twelfth grade in the Arab education system also increased considerably. According to Ministry of Education data, the rate of rose from 49% in 1995 to 63% in 2016. The impressive rise in the rate of entitlement to a matriculation certificate in the technological track in the Arab education system is noteworthy. According to

data from the Ministry of Education, during the past two decades, the rate has doubled, from 31% in 1995 to 62% in 2016. There was also a steady increase in the rate of matriculation eligibility among all Arab examinees in the academic track: from 52% in 1995 to 64% in 2016 (Central Bureau of Statistics website).

Despite the trend of consistent improvement, the level of achievements in the Arab education system is much lower than in the Hebrew education system, and over the years a large gap in the rate of matriculation eligibility between the two educational systems has been maintained. The dropout phenomenon continues to be particularly severe among Arab high school students, at a higher rate than in Jewish high schools. Data from a report published in July 2016 by the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Finance and the Economic Development Authority of Minorities in the Ministry for Social Equality show that among Arab students, participation rates from the middle school (seventh grade) to the high school level (12th grade) Compared with the corresponding rate among Jewish pupils: from 98% to 86%, compared to 99% and 92% in the Hebrew education sector (CBS website). For twelfth graders, quite a few students in the Arab education system are registered as students but in practice part of them often do not attend school. According to data from various sources, the dropout rate of the Arab education system is 20%. The drop-out phenomenon occurs mostly in the transition ages from middle to high school, and most dropouts are boys.[15]

The rates of entitlement to matriculation and the percentage of those who meet university entrance requirements among students in the Hebrew education system are significantly higher than in Arab education. However, it should be noted that within the Arab education system there is a high variance in the level of achievement according to religion. Data disaggregated for 2013 indicate that the rate of entitlement to a matriculation certificate among all examinees among Christians (72.3%) and Druze (72.2%) was significantly higher than that of Moslems (58.4%), and was slightly lower than the rate of eligibility for matriculation in Hebrew education (76.1%). The lowest rate was found among the Negev Bedouin (55.5%). Examination of the rate of entitlement to a matriculation certificate by all examinees who meet university entrance requirements is evident in the high percentage of Christian students who hold a higher quality matriculation certificate (64.6%). This is significantly higher than among Druze students (47.6%) and Muslims (41.6%). In fact, the percentage of those who meet university entrance requirements among Christians is identical to that in Hebrew education (63.8%). Among the Be-

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[15] H. Abu-Asbah, B. Fresco, Abu-Nasra, *Dropout of pupils in Arab, Bedouin and Druze education: summary report*, Ministry of Education 2013; A. Karakra Ibrahim, *A Drop in the Arab Education System*, [in:] *Arab Youth in Israel: Between Chance and Risk*, Eds. E. Reches, A. Rodnitzky, Tel Aviv 2008, p. 55-59.

douin in the Negev, the rate of eligibility for a matriculation certificate that meets university entrance requirements is the lowest – 34.6%.[16]

The data show the gap between the level of achievement in private schools – mostly Christians – and the level of achievement in schools belonging to the official Arab education system. The cost of studies in private Christian schools is high, but the more parents can afford to send their child to a private school, the higher his chances of attaining a matriculation certificate and improving his chances of admitting to the university.[17] Thus, one of the most influential factors in the level of student achievement is the economic level of their parents.

Infrastructure and budgets

With the establishment of the state, the level of infrastructure in the Arab education system was very poor. Until the mid-1950s there was only one Arab state high school in Israel, in Nazareth. In addition, there were several private Christian high schools operated by the Church even before the establishment of the state, and continued to operate even after its establishment. They were defined as "unofficially recognized," meaning that the state recognized their existence for compulsory education, but they were not part of the direct official state education. The cost of higher education in private high schools made it possible for many students who completed eight years of elementary education (under the Compulsory Education Law of those days) to waive their high school studies outside their community and remained responsible for supporting the family. Those who wished to continue their studies in a state high school were mostly forced to attend high schools in Jewish communities close to their place of residence.

From the first school year (1948/49) to the present, there has been an increase in the educational infrastructure (schools and classrooms) and in the number of pupils in the Arab education system.

The increase in primary education in the Arab education system was dramatic and at a much higher rate than the parallel increase in the Hebrew education system. However, the real revolution in the Arab education system took place in secondary education: from its almost complete absence in the early days of the state to an obvious matter that expresses the accepted average in Arab society.

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[16] R. Gra (Ed.), *Book of Arab Society in Israel (8): Population, Society, Economy*, Jerusalem 2016, p. 126-128; Statistical Abstract of Israel, 2015, Table 8.26.

[17] A. Reches, *Dilemmas of education in mixed cities*, [in:] *Together but Together: Mixed Cities in Israel*, Ed. A. Reches, Tel Aviv 2007, p. 103-106.

In addition to the establishment of kindergartens, elementary schools, junior high schools and high schools, other educational institutions were established, such as community centers, and centers for afternoon activities. In the four years of the Rabin-Peres government in mid 1990's, the education budget per capita recorded a real increase of 45 percent, the highest rate in comparison to the subsequent governments, and the Rabin-Peres government instituted a policy of affirmative action, which included additional hours of study and classrooms for elementary education in society.[18] The Economic Development Authority of the Arab Population In 2007 and over the past decade, the Israeli governments approved a series of multi-year programs for budgeting Arab communities in various fields, including education.[19]

The most well-known plan is the five-year plan for the years 2016-2020, which was approved by Government Decision No. 922 of December 2015. The plan allocated an unprecedented sum of NIS 15 billion for social and economic development of Arab communities in various fields such as education, transportation, industry and trade, culture and internal security. In the field of education, the program allocated NIS 185 million per year (totaling NIS 925 million over five years): NIS 55 million per year for teacher training for formal education, and NIS 130 million per year for informal education in Arab society. In addition, the Ministry of Education provided a differential budget of NIS 5.8 billion for the period of the program – five years (Ministry of Social Affairs website, 31.7.2016).

According to the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, which examined the socio-economic composition of students in the various educational streams in the years 2001-2014, there was a significant improvement in the economic situation of students in the Arab education system. Thus, in 2001, 54% of the Arab students belonged to the three lowest socio-economic deciles (1-3) and 32% to the four middle deciles (4-7); In 2014, the proportion of Arab students in the lower deciles fell to 38%, and their share in the middle deciles grew to 44%. In fact, according to the data for 2014, there is almost no difference between the percentage of pupils in the Arab education system who belong to the middle deciles (44%) and the percentage of Jewish pupils in the state education system belonging to these deciles (40%). The gap widened in the three highest deciles (7-10): 18% of the Arab pupils in the education system belong to these deciles, compared to 45% of the Jewish students.[20]

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[18] Y. Reiter, A. Cohen (Eds.), *Information Bulletin: Arab Society in Israel*, Second Edition, Neve Ilan 2012, p. 24-27.

[19] A. Rodnitzky, *Arab citizens of Israel at the beginning of the twenty-first century*, Tel Aviv 2014, p. 63-67.

[20] A. Weiss, *State of Israel: Social and Economic Charts in Israel 2017*, Jerusalem 2017, p. 56.

It turns out, therefore, that there are clear gaps between the Arab education system and the Hebrew education system. According to a review in the "Marker" newspaper from the beginning of 2016, which was prepared following the adoption of Resolution 922, it emerges that the Arab student is discriminated against: If the calculation also includes the budgets that local authorities and parents add to the education basket, the budget for an Arab pupil in the State of Israel is 78% -88% lower than that of a Jewish student.[21] The gaps between the Arab education system and the Hebrew education system are still evident in the lack of buildings, classrooms, laboratories and gymnasiums, and even the inadequacy of existing buildings and facilities. The Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel, which relies on data from the Ministry of Education, states that the gaps in budgets between Jewish and Arab society – both per pupil and class – are still very large.

Education policy towards Arabs in Israel

Education policy for the Arabs is one of the most difficult questions on the agenda of the state since its inception. In the first years, the Education Ministry debated whether to assimilate education to Arabs in the general education system or to grant Arab education a separate status, subject to supervision and control. In the end, it was decided to give the Arab education a separate status, alongside the Hebrew State education and the religious (Jewish) education. It was also determined that the language of instruction in Arab schools is Arabic, being the second official language in the country. However, the State Education Law (1953), which was passed in August 1953, did not recognize the uniqueness of the Arab population at all, but the aim of the law was to "base the country's elementary education on the values of Israeli Jewish culture and the achievements of science, love of the homeland and loyalty to the state and the people of Israel, training on agricultural work and crafts. "Only in 2003 with Amendment No. 11 added, the state was asked to consider language, culture, history, heritage and tradition of the Arab population and other population groups in the State of Israel into its policies, and to "recognize its rights Equal rights of all citizens of Israel".[22]

According to Majed al-Haj's study, the Ministry of Education decided that the education programs for Arabs in Israel would not deal with national and political issues, but with matters of culture, religion and tradition. The policy toward Arab education was to supervise and control both the curricula and the identity of teachers employed in its ranks. This policy was valid not

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[21] M. Arlosoroff, *An Arab child is equal to a ninth of a Jewish child*, The Marker 9.1.2016.
[22] State Education Law, 1953.

only during the period of military rule over Arab communities in Israel (1966-1948), which was characterized by close and direct supervision, but also many years later.[23] In fact, the role of the Education Ministry's adviser in charge of Arab education was abolished only in 2005. However, the question of curricula remains sensitive, especially in subjects dealing with political issues, such as citizenship and history.

The struggle for education policy for Arab students and youth has spawned a number of popular organizations and initiatives that have been mobilized to provide solutions. The most well-known body is the Follow-up Committee for Arab Education, a registered non-profit organization founded in 1984. The committee works to equate Arab education to Hebrew education, both at the level of infrastructure and the quality of curricula in a manner that will meet the unique needs of the Arab student in terms of culture, education and nationalism. In addition to monitoring the activities of the Ministry of Education and the state authorities regarding the Arab education system, the Monitoring Committee operates projects as an alternative to the Ministry of Education's curricula, based on the understanding that the state programs are not suitable for Arab schools. In addition to the Follow-up Committee, a number of registered Arab organizations are active in the fields of culture, education and leisure. Most of these associations have been established over the last two decades with the intention of enriching the content of the study for Arab students and youth in the fields of language, consciousness and identity.

In July 2010, the Follow-up Committee for Arab Education announced the establishment of the Arab Pedagogical Council. Its initiators stressed that this is an expression of the right of the Arab minority, as an indigenous minority, to preserve its heritage and national identity and to determine its own educational policy and content.[24] Another justification for the establishment of the Pedagogic Council was the claim that the status of Arab education in Israel should be compared to that of state-religious education and ultra-Orthodox education, which enjoy autonomy in determining their curricula. The stakeholders emphasized that the establishment of an independent Arab education system is not an expression of separation from the state, but an expression of integration within it, ie, expression of the collective identity of the Arab minority, maintaining the connection with the state. In October 2011, the Follow-Up Committee on Arab Education published the goals of the Arab Pedagogical Council in a document entitled "The Goals of Education and Instruction of the Palestinian Minority in Israel". The main goals mentioned in the document included the following goals: To strengthen Arab students'

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[23] M. Al-Hajj, *Education among Arabs in Israel: Control and Social Change*, Jerusalem 1996.
[24] Y. Jabarin, A. Vagabaria, *Education on Hold: Government Policy and Civil Initiatives to Promote Arab Education in Israel*, Nazareth 2010.

knowledge of Arabic as a language that expresses identity and belonging, as well as a means of communication, culture and research; To strengthen national identity among Arab students in a way that will be based on "cohesion among the Palestinian people, strengthening Palestinian memory and narrative, adherence to the historical and political rights of the Palestinian people, and cultural, religious and social pluralism" and encouraging Arab students to engage in constructive dialogue with the other, Jewish-Israeli perspective, based on a vision of shared life in one homeland, cooperation, equality and mutual respect.[25]

The approach adopted by the Education Ministry is integration of the Arab minority, rather than granting autonomy to Arab education. In the case of the Arab Pedagogical Council, even though the initiators of its establishment emphasized that it would operate within the framework of the Ministry of Education, the State does not cooperate with the idea and so far has not been recognized by the Ministry of Education.

On the other hand, the question of education policy continues to be seen in the air: Should the state allow the establishment of an Arab education administration that can determine curriculum content and work in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, or will the Arab education system continue to be part of the direct state education system.

Informal education in Arab society

To date, about half of the Arab associations are active in the fields of "culture and leisure" and "education and research".[26] These organizations provide content and educational frameworks outside the official curriculum and hours of activity at the school. This shows how informal education is essential for Arab society. However, for many years this field was placed at the bottom of the list of priorities, and generally it was not given the attention of the state authorities. The recent Government Resolution 922 education[27] is considered groundbreaking. For the first time, state authorities recognized the importance of informal education in Arab society, and set aside dedicated budgets for this purpose: 650 million Shekels over five years (2016-2020).

It has been close to five decades that the global interest in informal education is on the rise both in research and in the public-political arena. A review of case studies from the world, which examine the effects of informal education

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[25] A. Rodnitzky, *The Arab minority in Israel and the discourse on a "Jewish state"*, Jerusalem 2015, p. 96.

[26] A. Rodnitzky, *Arab citizens of Israel*, p. 45-49.

[27] Government decision. Decision no. 922, Israeli Government, Jerusalem 2016.

among youth and young people from disadvantaged groups in the popula-
tion, brings interesting conclusions. These are usually minority groups, either
born or immigrant, who differ from the general population in their culture
and ethnic origin. The following conclusions are derived from case studies in
developing countries around the world (in Africa, Southeast Asia and Central
America) and from test cases in developed countries in Europe, Canada, and
the United States: (1) informal education activities contribute to eradicating
illiteracy among young people who have difficulty integrating into the formal
education system in their country Due to language difficulties and cultural
barriers. The success of the programs is attributed to the fact that informal
education is adapted to the original culture of members of the weaker gro-
up; (2) activities of informal education frameworks empower members of the
group; They instill in them a sense of self-efficacy and encourage them to inte-
grate socially and economically in their country; (3) Activities of the informal
education frameworks reduce the risk behaviors among adolescents.

These conclusions are also valid in the case of the Arab minority in Israel.
Ayman Agbaria, an Arab-Palestinian researcher, believes that informal edu-
cation programs are designed to meet two needs derived from the situation of
the minority. First, the need for control, especially when dealing with a gro-
up of people living in a reality of political and social marginalization in the
country; Second, the need for autonomy, especially cultural autonomy. Such
autonomous space is intended to enable the community to maintain its langu-
age and customs, and to develop a discourse of its own and in its language.[28]

The recent Government's Decision 922 on informal education[29] was desi-
gned to provide an institutionalized response to a field that for many years
was not properly addressed by providing further funding and infrastructure
support, as a way to fix a long historic negligence of the field. This precario-
us situation of informal education in Arab society was caused by two main
reasons. First, the responsibility for informal education and its occupation is
dispersed among public bodies and various government ministries, each of
which defines informal education from its point of view. The Arab Associa-
tion for Community Centers, the Arab local authorities, the youth movements
and civil society organizations – all of which operate programs in the field of
informal education in Arab society, and the dispersal of responsibility creates
islands of professional knowledge without any body coordinating them or
guiding them according to any uniform line. Second, most of the Arab local
authorities are ranked in the lowest ranking socio-economic clusters, so they
find it difficult to place informal education high on their list of priorities and

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[28] A. Agbaria, *Informal Education in Palestinian Society in Israel*, [in:] *Informal Education in
a Changing Reality*, Eds. S. Rumi, M. Shmida, Jerusalem 2007, p. 295-314.

[29] Government decision. Decision no. 922, Israeli Government, Jerusalem 2016.

to allocate resources for this purpose, creating a large gap between the level of development of informal education in Arab society and that of Jewish society. Under such circumstances, Resolution 922 was intended to join and support new efforts in the field of non-formal education in Arab society, and the coming years will provide new insights on the new direction this system might take for the better or the worse.

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