

Formal and Non-Formal Adult Education – Provision of Opportunities for Literacy, Numeracy and basic skills in Israel

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Historical development, definitions and current approaches to formal and informal adult education, basic literacy, numeracy and other fundamental skills

The effort to eradicate illiteracy began in Israel during the 1950s, a time of mass immigration from undeveloped third world nations in Africa and Asia. The campaign was conducted by the leadership of Israel's Ministry of Education, with the participation of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the National Labor Union, local authorities, voluntary organizations and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem's Center for Adult Education (Schely-Newman, 2011: 116-117).

Female soldier-teachers and volunteers went out to immigrant settlements and taught the women basic speaking reading, writing in Hebrew and simple arithmetic. Most of the teaching was one-on-one and took place under far from ideal conditions, e.g., in the homes of women as they cared for their children, in laundry rooms, and the like. They had few teaching materials available, and primarily used Sha'ar laKoreh heChadash ["Gateway for the New Reader"], published by the Ministry of Education. The goals of the campaign were: basic literacy, integration into the surrounding (literate) society, and social change (Tokatli, 2011: 128-138). More formal literacy studies were held at the IDF's Marcus

Military Camp in Haifa, and at the Workers' School in Jerusalem.

In 1977, in response to a statistical survey that found no improvement in Israel's literacy rate, a program known by the Hebrew acronym TEHILA [= The Designated Education Program for the Adult Learner], was established based upon a systematic, graduated, curriculum with a permanent, professional teaching staff who regularly attended continuing education, and large centers in which classes were organized by learning levels (Tokatli & Grabelsky, 2008).

Over the years, the Ministry of Education's Division of Adult Education has developed an extensive network of 86 TEHILA centers throughout the country that serve thousands of adult learners, mainly women, from all sectors of Israeli society. Partners in the program include: regional authorities, local councils, the Israel Association of Community Centers, women's organizations, the Project Renewal neighborhood renewal initiative, and relevant government ministries.

The graduated learning materials used to teach the subjects in basic knowledge covered by TEHILA were prepared by specialized teams under the guidance and supervision of the Division of Adult Education, at both national and local levels. The areas of study were gradually expanded, and in response to learners' requests, came to include preparation for a range of remunerative professions. A variety of enrichment classes and activities supplement the semi-formal curriculum: painting, choir, crafts, excursions, attending performances, holiday parties, and guest lectures. Once a year, on "Adult Learners' Day", gala national gatherings are organized and attended by thousands of learners, teachers and public figures. Over the years a National Women Learners Council was established. Between all the participants in the program, especially female teachers and learners, warm and supportive relations have developed. Teachers from all sectors (who originally had trained to teach children and adolescents), attend regular, organized, regional and

national continuing education courses. Initially TEHILA concentrated on literacy. The women who stayed in the classes wanted to continue to enriched their general knowledge and so the scope of diverse courses offered within the program has broadened.

In 1981, a program for high school education was created within the in the framework of the Open University, in which many graduates of the high-level TEHILA programs participated.

The success of the TEHILA format proved that participation in basic literacy studies within the organized framework of a classroom empowered learners by: improving their status in the family and in the community; enhancing their ability to function in the various roles that are part of a literate society; strengthening their relationships with younger family members; enriching their quality of life; and improving their ability to cope with cognitive challenges.

In 1987 TEHILA won the Prize of the Minister of Education for its activities and achievements.

In 1996 the Division of Adult Education earned an Award from the International Literacy Association for its work with less-educated populations, primarily immigrants from Ethiopia.

As noted above, the decisive majority of TEHILA learners are women (age 55 above). Very few men participated, for a number of reasons, preferring to study in special classes that were organized for them in large places of employment. The study format in these classes was different (from TEHILA), and was oriented more toward topics related to the men's work tasks and toward accreditation .

In recent years, the administration of TEHILA was transferred to the Ministry for Senior Citizens (now entitled the Ministry for Social Equality).

The Division has overseen “second-chance” education programs, including elementary education and high school studies at various levels,

up to the TAGAT level (teudat gmar tichonit) – high school equivalency diploma.

In recent years, the Division of Adult Education has had to re-think its definitions and approaches to adult education. In the area of informal education, the Division has had to meet the special needs of the less-educated in Israeli society, in particular immigrants from Ethiopia, the Caucasus Mountain region, and Bukhara, as well as veteran Israelis in minority sectors: Arabs, Druze, Bedouin, and others. Basic literacy was defined as the acquisition of reading, writing (verbal literacy) and basic arithmetic (numercy). Regarding formal education, there is a continuing need to systematize programs for the completion of elementary and secondary studies.

General description of the country, the literacy environment, legislation pertaining to adult education, basic literacy and numeracy

Israel is a study in contrasts. It is a land of ancient traditions in tandem with outstanding achievements in technological development. It is home to Jews, Muslims, Druze, and Christians. The Jewish sector comprises Israeli-born citizens, veterans (immigrants who have been in the country for a long time), and new immigrants from an array of countries and cultures. The non-Jewish sector – encompassing Muslims, Christians and other religious groups – comprises 20% of the total population.

Based on the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) the population aged 15 and over can be classified by years of schooling as follows:

0-4 years of schooling	3.5%
5-8 years of schooling	6%
9-10 years of schooling	9.5%
11-12 years of schooling	34.3%
13-15 years of schooling	22%
16+ years of schooling	25%

The definitive majority of Israeli citizens are educated. Concomitantly, there exists an uneducated and less-educated minority that constitutes just over 9% of the total population. However, this group represents a much higher percent within minority sectors and among specific Jewish immigrant groups: those from Ethiopia, the Caucasus Mountain region, and Bukhara, who did not have opportunities to acquire an education in their youth.

The Division of Adult Education is a leader in initiating, deploying, organizing, coordinating collaborative efforts with partners, allocating funding, and conducting studies in basic literacy, as well as elementary and secondary education for adult learners. Collaborators in this extensive activity include relevant governmental authorities, local authorities and public sector organizations. The Adult Education Association is the umbrella organization under which are subsumed all the institutions and individuals involved in the various aspects of adult learning in Israel, and it represents the country in international forums.

Efforts in Israel to advance binding legislation in the area of adult education according basic Hebrew language skills and education were not approved by the Parliament, and therefore there is no law that refers to adult education or issues of adult literacy. Only two specific laws for

adults exist: one guarantees subsidized study for demobilized soldiers, and the other subsidizes study for people with disabilities and emotional illness.

State funding for adult education programs is conditional upon allocations within the framework of the budgets enacted by the Israel Parliament [Knesset]. Prioritized programs are funded by the relevant government ministries, local authorities, and NGOs, e.g., the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), Joint Distribution Committee (JDC-Israel), the Israel Association of Community Centers, women's organizations, labor organizations, public and private-sector employers, various foundations and the National Lottery of Israel [Mifal HaPaysis]. Recently, the government decided to significantly increase funding for adult education, in particular for the ultra-Orthodox [haredi] and Arab sectors (Koren & Bassok, Report to UNESCO, 2015). Programs that teach reading and writing (verbal literacy) and basic arithmetic (numeracy), are offered at no charge. In classes at the elementary and secondary school levels, participant fees are nominal. The fees for higher-level study are more substantial, but stipends are available for those who meet the criteria.

Adult education in a range of subjects such as parenting, health, road safety and more, as well as learning activities in an array of areas are offered to adults in Israel by a number of entities, most commonly in the governmental or public sectors.

Current service provision, and formal/non-formal adult education programs in literacy, numeracy and basic skills

The diversity of Israel's population dictates differing approaches to the specific needs of various subgroups: Jews, Arabs, Bedouin, new immigrants and veterans – uneducated, less-educated, and highly-educated.

The Division of Adult Education's goals are to develop a culture of continual, lifelong learning; to foster public awareness of this subject at the local-community level; to reduce educational gaps; to absorb immigrants in terms of language, culture, and education; to develop a training system for adult-education professionals and academize this field; and to promote international cooperation with relevant agents.

The policy of the Division of Adult Education in the Israel Ministry of Education is to meet these differing needs by raising awareness as to the importance adult education, and by developing and overseeing the implementation of appropriate study programs for the many programs in Adult Education (Koren, 2015). Implementing this policy entails resource pooling and strengthening partnerships with other government ministries that conduct specialized study programs, as well as with an assortment of institutions and organizations, including: local authorities, "Popular Cathedrae" programs (a network of learning and cultural programs designed for mature learners), JDC-Israel, women's organizations, the Jewish Agency, the Israel Association of Community Centers, the IDF, the Israel Prison Service, and others. The Adult Education Association of Israel, which the Division of Adult Education funds and is itself a member of, incorporates all the aforementioned bodies.

Within the framework of the Division of Adult Education extensive activity in supervision, training, and curricula development for the various target groups takes place. Program dissemination is accompanied by ongoing teacher training and guidance, supervision and formal/informal evaluations, to ensure that programs improve, and that any deficiencies are addressed.

Equivalency Education

The overarching goal of the equivalency education sphere in the Adult Education Division is to reduce educational gaps in Israel's adult population. The Division tries to give priority to populations who require special support and reinforcement: immigrants, those with little education, job-seekers, soldiers, prisoners. For this reason there are varying levels of adult education study tracks. The study tracks were designed according to the needs of adult learners. The curricula focus on this heterogeneous group's differing characteristics, needs and abilities. Teaching and subject matter are based on the underlying principles of adult education. Learners are fit into class levels according to placement exam results. Upon successful completion of the studies a certificate is awarded according to the study track under the Division's supervision. This certificate is recognized for the purpose of receiving continuing education points and for educational and employment promotion.

Elementary Equivalency Education - Basic Education

In Israel, basic literacy begins with reading, writing, and reading comprehension at gradually higher levels; with the ability to express oneself in writing at incrementally higher levels; and learning that is consistently expanding into manifold areas of knowledge that constitute the basis for orientation within a literate society and its culture. Numeracy is the ability to understand the meaning of numbers and to carry out the basic arithmetical operations necessary for everyday life. Beyond these capabilities, included in basic literacy will be the ability to use simple electronic devices: computers, mobile phones, and the like.

The entrance requirement for elementary equivalency education is passing placement examinations in reading comprehension and math. Studies are planned while taking the differences among the learners into account, and therefore a variety of curricula is needed. There are two

tracks for elementary equivalency education - one for the Jewish sector and one for the Arab-speaking sector.

- Learners from the Jewish sector must pass two national exams in reading comprehension and mathematics and three internal exams, one in civics and two more in elective subjects. Scope of studies: 500 hours.
- Learners from the Arabic-speaking sector must pass two national exams in Arabic and mathematics, and three internal exams, one in pre-elementary level Hebrew, one in civics, and one more in an elective subject. Scope of studies: 500 hours.

Equivalency Programs Intended for Specific Target Populations

are funded through the government budget, and overseen by the Division of Adult Education in cooperation with other government ministries.

For the Bedouin of the Negev a five-year program intended primarily for women up to age 45 is offered that aims to advance their integration in the labor market.

For the General Arabic-Speaking Public a program for women aged 21-23 in the Arab, Druze and Circassian sectors is offered that enables them to complete their education and promotes them personally, with a view towards integration into employment.

For Soon-to-be Demobilized IDF Soldiers, the Ministry of Defense funds high school studies conducted under the supervision of the Division for Adult Education within the Ministry of Education, which is also responsible for pedagogic guidance and awarding completion certificates.

For Israel Prison Service Employees equivalency studies are offered under the supervision of the Division of Adult Education, which is also responsible for pedagogic guidance and awarding certificates of completion.

Programs for Ethiopian Immigrants

The Division of Adult Education conducts (and funds) a wide selection of studies supplemental to the *ulpan*¹ for learning Hebrew for new immigrants. These programs are customized for diverse populations of adults, and reflect the spirit of the times. Recently, the use of teleprocessing and digital learning has increased in classes for educated immigrants. However, as there are significant numbers of Ethiopian immigrants who do not have basic literacy skills, even in their native languages, programs for them need to address this while concurrently providing Hebrew language studies.. Accordingly, the Division of Adult Education undertook to prepare special programs, to double the length of the ulpan studies period, and to provide appropriate teacher training (Rubenstein, S., 2011, pp. 17-28).

Education Programs for Ethiopian Immigrants outside of the ulpan framework are funded by JDC-Israel and are offered under the supervision of the Ministry of Education's Division of Adult Education. The Division publishes textbooks for immigrant populations from Ethiopia, the Caucasus Mountain region and Bukhara. (See the list of the textbooks published by the Division of Adult Education and JDC-Israel).

Mila Tova ("A Good Word") is a program that teaches pre-elementary-level reading comprehension for mothers of young children which incorporates other areas of knowledge in preparation for elementary-level studies. Learning materials are based on Ethiopian folk tales and a special newspaper.

The *Delet Ptucha L'Taasuka* ("Open Door to Employment") program is intended for immigrants from Ethiopia, the Caucasus

1 An framework for the intensive study of *Hebrew*. Ulpan (plural ulpanim) is literally translated as "studio". The ulpan concept was developed shortly after the establishment of the State in 1948 to address mass influxes of immigrants to the nascent country.

Mountain region, and Bukhara, and is offered at several levels: pre-elementary, elementary and secondary, up to TAGAT (high school equivalency diploma). The program teaches job search skills, prepares participants for employment interviews and coping with a variety of work situations, and teaches concepts that are prevalent in the Israeli work world. Participants' employment experience, cultural background and level of Hebrew knowledge are all taken into account. In 2001 the "Open Door to Employment" program was awarded the UNESCO International Literacy Prize.

Education Program for Bedouin Women

In the framework of a five-year government plan to establish new education centers for Bedouin women—in place of the individual classrooms that existed in several settlements—the Division proposed to the directors of the Bedouin local authorities that government-funded centers for basic Arabic literacy and continuing education be established. Recruitment for female learners is conducted via the (children's) school system. Mothers are motivated to learn so they can help their children with their homework; contribute to the family income; fill their free time once the children have grown up; and read the Koran. In line with traditional Bedouin culture, only women teach female students. The centers are operated jointly by the Division of Adult Education, the local authorities and Arab teachers from the formal education system. There is a noted shortage of Arabic textbooks beyond the beginner level. In the Hebrew language class books written for Ethiopian immigrants are used. (Bassok, I., 2015.)

Methods of government supervision; evaluation of learning opportunities

Government ministries that directly conduct study programs for adults in their areas of specialization, supervise these programs directly.

The Division of Adult Education supervises the implementation of the various projects in which literacy and general education programs are offered to adults. Ongoing supervision is carried out by national and regional supervisors, who receive reports from program directors and teachers in joint meetings and in writing. Division supervisors visit learning centers and classrooms, observe lessons, and converse with participants. Written reports cover both finances and activities. Unmediated discussions facilitate both identification of problems and difficulties faced by teachers and learners, and attempts in finding pragmatic solutions.

For informal education programs, qualitative research is more appropriate (Tokatli & Grebelsky, 2003). The purpose is to understand complex realities via a holistic approach. Qualitative research methods in informal learning systems include: observation; open-ended questionnaires; informal interviews; content analyses; case studies; action research; life stories. Moreover, supervisors also meet with the curriculum developers and program directors, who are in constant and ongoing contact with the teachers and learners. Meetings between all the supervisory levels facilitate two-way communication and the real-time introduction of improvements to the programs and teaching methods.

However, programs tiered in accordance with formal requirements also require quantitative evaluation at various stages. Probabilistic-quantitative-statistical research is suited to assess variables that can be measured and quantified, e.g.: scholastic attainments, variables between background data and academic success, and more.

Following are a number of achievement tests used in the programs in which the Division of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education is involved.

- Elementary education programs for adults require early assessment of reading comprehension and basic arithmetic skills. This assessment is carried out via a screening test for program admission. There are two such screening tests, one for Hebrew speakers and one for Arabic speakers. At this level, a variety of programs is available, according to the variations among the learners.
- In the Grade 10, 11 and 12 equivalency programs of the Division of Adult Education in the Ministry of Education, those who complete these stages receive certificates issued by the Division once they have passed the Division's exams. In the TAGAT (high school equivalency diploma) track as well, the exams are based on the Division's programs. Matriculation exams are administered by the testing division of the Ministry of Education.
- Below is an example of evaluation research on an adult education project. A research team of the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (known by the Hebrew acronym RAMA) conducted an evaluation of the "Ad Halom" program of the Division of Adult Education (members of the RAMA research team: Kahana T., Goldschmidt N., Kanfis, F., Rosen A., Golan Y., 2015). The researchers used a combination of quantitative instruments (questionnaires) and qualitative tools (in-depth interviews and focus groups). The main changes found were as follows:
 - Participants were better able to help their children;
 - There was an improved literacy environment in the home;
 - Participants were better able to be involved in their children's studies and to increase the latter's motivation to learn;
 - Participants' ability to express themselves verbally and in writing improved;

- Participants demonstrated improved ICT literacy;
- Participants demonstrated broader general knowledge and knowledge of current events;
- Participants described improved social status and self-image;
- Participants demonstrated increased motivation to learn.

Remarks

The various agents involved in adult education programs conduct internal evaluations that help them improve the services they provide. However, lack of adequate financing impedes their ability to conduct ongoing, concurrent professional evaluations of each and every program, which consequently increases the need for continual monitoring by the supervisory and training agencies.

Challenges in supervision of formal and non-formal programs for adults, and the development of literacy and numeracy skills

In the past, the challenges faced by agencies supervising and managing basic literacy and numeracy programs focused on uneducated and less-educated target populations. In recent times, the average individual is expected to be increasingly familiar with the rapid developments in basic knowledge and electronic communications technology. These expanded needs do not obviate the necessity to continue providing disadvantaged populations with basic literacy in traditional areas. Nonetheless, more and more resources and thought must be allocated to a literacy that is broadening and branching at a dizzying pace in new directions, including:

- Technological changes that mandate study and practice to adapt to them;
- Abrupt and frequent change in people's work lives;
- Needs in the areas of health and physical/mental functioning that

- derive from longer life expectancies;
- A growing complexity of relationships between four coexisting generations in a changing world;
 - The need to enable vocational retraining in midlife and after retirement;
 - The need for meaningful activity during increasingly lengthier periods of forced leisure among the elderly;
 - The need to cope with loneliness due to a gradual decline in the social and financial environment of the older population.

A major expansion and deepening of the concept of “basic literacy” is therefore the main challenge facing those responsible for overseeing and managing adult basic learning programs. This challenge needs to be addressed by “brainstorming” teams at the level of administrative and supervisory personnel, and appropriate resource allocation.

To channel budgets and efforts optimally, establishment of local organizations such as “A Learning City” (Ha’Ir HaLomedet) in Modi’in, Israel, is recommended for consideration (Magar O., 2011). This kind of organization is based upon aggregating resources and efforts in the community in order to offer local residents (in all sectors) learning activities that promote the ability to respond to challenges deriving from globalization, and to acquire needed skills, knowledge and adaptability capabilities. Learning that takes place within the Learning City framework has the potential to promote personal and communal growth, and to enrich social cohesion. Pooling the efforts of the various agents engaged in providing basic studies for adults is likely to increase the variety of opportunities on offer to the assorted target populations, ensure optimal utilization of existing resources, and perhaps, procure additional resources for activity expansion.

Recommendations for Developing Supervisory Parameters for Adult Education Programs

Following are recommendations for developing supervisory parameters aimed at improving the development and implementation of adult education programs:

- Those responsible for adult studies must strive for a situation wherein all of society's youth and a large percentage of its adults – women and men – are assured a realistic opportunity to acquire literacy and numeracy. They must aspire to ensure the existence of structures, infrastructures and legal frameworks that provide adults with opportunities to integrate into advanced studies.
- In formulating the overarching goals of adult education programs at elementary and secondary literacy levels, the supervisory agents must strive to recognize the relevance of factors that must be taken into account, such as: difficult economic circumstances, poor health status, social inequality, gender inequality, cultural traditions inimical to education of the masses and their empowerment, and more.
- It is advisable to involve supervisory agents in the stages of program planning and development so that all participating parties can jointly consider potential improvements. This role can solve some of the problems in the field of literacy and avoid problems during and after the program.
- The criteria for literacy should be international but with national and local culture and the needs of society in Israel.
- The supervisory agents should ensure that adequate attention is given to the various cultural-historical backgrounds of learners during the preparation and implementation of the programs. In some of the projects as Bedouin and Arabs women.
- Supervisory agents should encourage the development of graduated

programs spanning a range of difficulty levels that can expand into a gamut of disciplines and study tracks, to enable uneducated and less-educated adults to move forward in terms of personal, vocational and social development.

- The supervisory agencies must verify that those responsible for learner recruitment and placement offer guidance and counseling regarding directions for personal development, and that they provide organized information on the programs offered, the diplomas awarded, and the future opportunities they open up.
- Supervisory agents should verify that appropriate learning conditions prevail in all classrooms.
- It is advisable that supervisory personnel ensure the existence of a support and guidance system to help participants cope with problems that arise during their studies, e.g.: time management workshops, emotional support, reinforcement of learners' mutual commitment, and the like.
- To reduce the phenomenon of dropping-out, supervisory agents should verify that an introductory session is held for each group of learners to clarify and coordinate expectations. It is recommended that all learners be made aware of potential challenges (in terms of the difficulty of the course materials), and the need for them to have support and encouragement from their families and social environment.
- It is recommended that supervisory agencies act to provide learners at adult education centers with access to the resources necessary for a literacy environment: guidance centers, libraries, various modes of communication, computers and the internet.
- In conclusion, supervisory agents must contend with the main challenges involved in adult literacy and education, and in conducting formal and informal study programs: procuring funds;

creating suitable infrastructures; preparing appropriate curricula and learning materials; assuring proper training for those involved in the various specialized areas of adult education; preparing a system of professional evaluation; establishing new modalities for providing adult education, such as the Learning City in Modi'in which has been recognized as a model by UNESCO.

Forecast for 2030

We were asked to react to the UN's recent decision according to which all young people and a substantial proportion of adults, men and women alike, achieve basic literacy and numeracy proficiency by 2030. Moreover, we were asked to clarify what constitutes literacy in Israel, and how it can be measured.

In Israel, children are required by law to attend compulsory education, while secondary schooling is available to most youth. Therefore, it can be assumed that the 2030 goal set for youth will, in fact, be achieved. Regarding adults, one must distinguish between the different age groups. Among older age groups – those currently aged 60 and over – it is estimated that the proportion of the less-educated will be higher. This is especially true with regard to older women in minority sectors, as well as among immigrants from developing countries. It is to be hoped that the programs now being conducted – by governmental and non-governmental agencies – to entrench, expand, and deepen literacy skills, will significantly increase the proportion of Israel's population that is literate by 2030.

Measurements of the above-noted abilities will be conducted via oral and national written exams and within international context and comparison. The national report of the survey in Israel of PIAAC will be published in July 2016 and will be a very important data to learn from it..

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