

Civil Society Programs in the Education System

Joint regularization test case – the Trisector Roundtable

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Over the past decade, we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of civil ventures for collaboration with schools in Israel (Weinheber and Ben-Nun, 2008). This phenomenon is apparent in various partnerships, including: the operation of continuous educational programs on different subjects, training of teachers in external programs, various volunteer work and contributions made by individuals, organizations and businesses in schools.

During the 1980's and 1990's, following a gradual process of privatization, the face of the education system changed, leading mainly to increased involvement of parents in the schools, increased differences between curriculums and weaker centralization (Dahan Yossi, Yonah Yossi, 1999; Inbar 1989; Trison 1993; Etzel, Gidron et al. 2003).

During the 1980's, extra curriculum programs (ECP), also referred to as "the grey education" began to develop. In 1988, 27% of ECP operators worked under non-profit organizations through which payment was made to the teachers (Gidron et al., 2003). A tendency to communicate with external elements (non-profit organizations and businesses) was apparent in the Ministry of Education during the 1990's, in order to implement new projects in fields which were until that time foreign to the ministry (Segen et al., Gidron, et al., 2003).

In Israel, as in other countries, the weakening of the state's control of education allowed entry to new ways of operation and management, which include the schools, parents, local authorities, non-profit organizations and foundations, in educational processes and content determination (Benavot and Resh, 2003).

The social entrepreneurs are led by a wide spectrum of motivations: from classic philanthropy in Israel and abroad, through social responsibility of businesses and development of service providing foundations, to non-profit organizations with a social agenda that wish to participate and influence the public education system. The extent and variety of this phenomenon in Israel is unique to the rest of the world (Weinheber and Ben-Nun, 2008). Such multiplicity of philanthropic/civil organizations in the education system is

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common in various third world countries, but in those cases the organizations are international aid organizations. In Israel, this is a local phenomenon, of an active, involved civil society. However, alongside the advantages and benefits of these partnerships, several issues must be considered: an uneven distribution of innovative programs and resources, instability – connection with the Ministry of Education is temporary and dependent on the people involved and available resources, programs that do not suit needs, lack of obligatory professional standards of teaching and education, etc.

The third sector (philanthropy and non-profit organizations) is considered a sector characterized by flexibility and the ability to quickly provide solutions to changing needs. Furthermore, the third sector is considered a diversity and creativity promoting element in schools. On the other hand, there is much redundancy and lack of coordination between organizations working in the same field, and competition between organizations (for resources, knowledge and territory) is great.

Involvement of the business sector in the education system is smaller, activity is carried out as part of the company's social involvement/corporate responsibility policy, and is usually through connection with a mediating element (non-profit organizations) from the third sector. The activity of the business sector is often viewed as one of financial interest. Another characteristic of the business sector is the operation of volunteers as part of the organization's perception of community involvement.

Over the past few years, the Ministry of Education has made several unsuccessful attempts to determine policy and regulate the matter of external programs, as the phenomenon grows (Zeiler, 2006 Roundtable Meeting 1 Summary). The described development is a result of an inter-sector process, utilizing the Roundtable framework, which led to the formulation of a joint policy for the integration of programs in the education system.

An inter-sectorial discourse in the Israeli government

In 2008, a government decision² dealing with the relationship between the government, civil society and the business sector was made in order to achieve public goals (decision 3190). A policy statement was also approved as part of the government decision, under the title "The Israeli government, the civil society, and the business community: partnership, empowerment and transparency", which defined the following three targets:

"Strengthening of the collaboration and establishment of the relationship between the sectors, to the extent desired by the sectors, while maintaining the partners' independence; increasing integration of civil society organizations in the operation of social services, while encouraging discourse with them prior to making political decisions; encouragement of processes that contribute to empowerment, professionalization, supervision and

² <http://www.pmo.gov.il/Secretary/GovDecisions/2008/Pages/des3190.aspx>

transparency in the civil society while implementing similar standards in the government and business sector for working within this framework”³.

Implementation of these targets required the formulation of methodology that was supported by a tender for operation of “Roundtables”. The “Roundtable” serves as the platform for discourse and assists in the creation of a culture of open, contributing, joint discourse. The “Roundtable” also serves as a framework for continuous discourse, and as the foundations for promotion of issues from various perspectives.

The characteristics and unique contribution of each sector are the greatest advantage of the inter-sectorial “Roundtable”. The basic assumptions of the table require the maintenance of each sector’s unique characteristics and relative advantages, in order to allow effective inter-sectorial discourse.

The Roundtable, within the framework of the inter-sectorial discourse, promotes values such as trust, unmediated mutual acquaintance, agreement, determination of joint responsibility, increased coordination and even joint formulation of policy based on recommendations. All these comprise just one level of the process, the range of possible discourse results is wide and greatly depends on target setting, layout of the process and expected results.

The “Roundtable” in the Ministry of Education – formulation of recommendations into policy, characterization of the information base and development of work processes for a wide inter-sectorial forum – mission and process

Mission and process

The goal of the “Roundtable” in the Ministry of Education, was the formulation of the ministry’s policy from recommendations, regarding the integration of external programs in the education system.

In order to realize this goal, three sub-missions have been defined:

- a. Formulation of policy from recommendations and characterization of an internet information base for programs in the education system, together with the ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) Department at the Ministry of Education.
- b. Optimal management of partnerships – development of an inter-sectorial work process for optimal introduction of programs into educational frameworks.
- c. Formulation of an agreement in the “spirit of the partnership” regarding the integration of programs in the education system, which will include the obligations of the partners, the principles and applications of integrating programs in the educational framework.

³ www.pmo.gov.il/policyplanning/shituf/Documents/migzar.ppt

After defining sub-missions, the process and an index of participants/representations at the table were developed.

Development of the process included three components: consultation meetings, Roundtable conferences and work team meetings (one team for mission (a), and the other for missions (b) and (c)), as described in figure 1.

The first stage included four consultation meetings which served for coordinating expectations, additional targets of the consultation meetings were: collection of material and information, definition of sub-missions, as well as acquaintance and formulation of agreements between the process participants. It was decided to hold meetings in sectorial discussion groups – third sector, business sector, local authority, and a comprehensive summation meeting – in order to allow work at this stage to be carried out in homogenous groups and in order to understand the agreements and differences between each sector. Sixty participants attended the consultation meetings and have laid the knowledge foundations for the work of the Roundtable and future planning teams.

Figure 1 – An outline of the regularization of civil society programs in the education system

The Inter-Sectorial Round Table in the Ministry of Education

Committee for formulation of recommendations for establishment of a program pool

First meeting; Second meeting; Third meeting; Fellows meeting; Fourth meeting;

Consultation Third sector; Consultation Business sector; Consultation Local authority; Summation meeting

Fellows – Round Table 1 – Definition of mission

Fellows – Round Table 2 – Intermediate results and dilemmas

Round Table 3 – Summary of committee products – inter-sectorial agreement

Committee for the formulation of principles of optimal partnership at the school level

צריך להכניס את התרשים באנגלית

Participants

The Roundtable was designed based on a model of representation that balances between two groups: one is of first sector representatives, HQ, field and local authority – including department managers in the Ministry of Education, ICT personnel, legal advice, school principals, teachers, education department managers in the local authority, local authority representatives, etc. The other group is composed of representatives of third sector, philanthropy organizations and business sector elements involved in activity in the education system as contribution to the community. Additional representatives of the

community and parents took part in the Round Table. Shown in table 1 is an index of representatives.

A call for participation in the Roundtable was published in order to find participants from the first and second sectors, and 170 applications to join the table were received. An advising committee that included the process leader on behalf of the Ministry of Education alongside academic professionals in the third sector selected the table members, according to the following guidelines:

From the first sector – twelve Ministry of Education representatives (HQ, districts, school principals and teachers), five representatives of the local authority center and education department managers in the local authority.

From the second sector – four community relations representatives of business organizations

From the third sector – fourteen representatives of organizations from various fields and sizes

Community representatives – two representatives of the parents and community center

Due to the large amount of applications to the table and the desire to expand the partner circle, the guiding professional team decided on two types of participation in the process – table membership status and table fellow status. Roundtable members participated in all processes while Roundtable fellows participated only in Roundtable conferences but not in the planning teams. Roundtable fellows requested to hold a consultation meeting specifically for fellows, and such a meeting was held. A total of over 100 participants took part in the process.

In January 2014, following four consultation meetings and the completion of the process outline, the first Roundtable conference was held, led by the Minister of Education and the ministry's director general. The meeting included a presentation of the purpose of the Roundtable as well as the sub-missions and planning teams. The planning teams worked between Roundtable conferences in order to present the intermediate results of the teams in the second conference, in addition to key questions for discussion at the table. Final products were presented at the third conference in order to receive the table's agreement.

Between January and May of 2014, three Roundtable conferences and four planning team meetings were held, as planned, as well as an additional meeting for the presentation of intermediate products, attended by the Roundtable fellows. Work between meetings of the Roundtable and the planning teams continued in the form of "homework" and preparation for the upcoming meetings. Sharing technologies were used in order to hold validation surveys for the products formed by the teams, and for digital forms for creation of an infrastructure of material for the upcoming meetings.

The products

Three work products achieved in the process are in accordance with the sub-missions:

- a. **The program pool** – An agreement was reached regarding the principles of the program pool as well as prerequisites for entering the pool, status and advancement in the pool, removal of a program from the pool. The program pool team included representatives of the Ministry of Education's ICT Department, who worked on characterization of the program pool based on the team's recommendations. Following the end of the team's work, a characterization of the pool, held by the ICT team in accordance with the team's recommendations, was presented. This led to an additional product - technological characterization of an information base to be used by dozens of partners. Figure 2 shows the general characterization of the program pool, appendix 1 shows the Roundtable recommendations for the information base.

Figure 2 – Program Pool – General scheme צריך תרשים

Ministry program or in cooperation with a ministry representative

External programs with no ministry contact

Administrative check – Proper management of non-profit organizations and a corresponding format for business organizations. An affidavit of proper law-abiding conduct. An affidavit stating that the organization is not operating against the state of Israel or against "educational targets". Commitment and affidavit regarding (not) advertising, overtly or covertly, in the education system.

Program name:

Program summary:

Main subject:

Review by the principal:

Evaluation reports:

Review by the ministry representative:

Organization's implementation report:

Additional evidence:

- b. **A consensual work process for the establishment of an optimal partnership at the school level** – A consensual work process was presented for the integration of programs in schools. The presented process was based on knowledge gathered from all members of the planning team, including education department managers in the local authorities, school principals, non-profit organization directors, etc. The team presented a recommended Gantt chart for an annual cycle of process implementation. Figure 3 shows the process as was agreed upon at the Roundtable, appendix 2 shows the recommendations of the optimal partnership at the school level team.

Figure 3 – An optimal work process for program integration in schools

Integration of programs in the school or educational framework

Local program committee (local authority dependent) – program pool – program committee

Program committee – led by the school principal. Participants: the education department, supervision, the school staff, parent representatives. **תרשים אנגלית**

Educational framework; Preliminary

- Mapping and evaluation of existing programs
- Defining targets and needs in the work plan
- Mapping of internal capabilities, the staff's part in the integration process of the program, budget inquiry

Formulation of a recommendation for the specific educational framework

Agreement with the external organization and presentation of the integrated program in the work plan of the educational framework (including a commitment to conduct an evaluation)

Program management (each program separately):

- Appointment of a person to lead the program on behalf of the educational framework and on behalf of the external organization
- Establishment of a work plan in accordance with the educational need (resources, budget and funding sources, implementation measures and evaluation tools)
- Presentation of the plans to the entire staff of the educational framework and the parents
- Pooling and implementation of accumulated knowledge
- Follow-up of activity execution
- Supervision and evaluation

Program end

- Summation discussion in the steering team
- Presentation of the evaluation results
- Management of accumulated knowledge from the program
- Entering feedback to the program pool

Program end initiated by the educational framework

- Termination of the program
- Knowledge management
- Drawing conclusions

Program end initiated by the external organization

- Termination of the program
- Locating a new program
- Implementation of the new program in the educational framework

Required tools

For the external program coordinator

Contract/agreement for external programs

Guidelines for coordinating expectations with the program contact person

Review of the external program

For the principal

Mapping of needs

Work plan including external programs

Review of the external program

For the supervisor

Criteria for the integration of an external program

Review of the external program

School work plan

*"Principal" may also refer to director of the educational framework

- c. **Inter-sectorial convention for operation of programs in the education system** – the convention is a declarative document presenting the inter-sectorial "spirit of partnership", as was agreed upon by the partners. It includes a statement of acknowledgement of the unique contribution of each sector to the education system, as well as an acknowledgement of the need for inter-sectorial collaborations for the advancement of the education system. The agreement continues on to elaborate a list of principles and a series of applications for the partnership in operation of programs in the education system. The agreement was signed at the final Roundtable and is attached as appendix 3.

Process achievements

Other than the professional products described above, several additional benefits may arise from the process:

- a. A positive, efficient inter-sectorial, multi-participant work experience – the process demonstrated the need and ability to conduct discourse on very practical, relevant issues in the relationship between the sectors. By the end of the process it was apparent that the Ministry of Education considers the Roundtable methodology a systemic work instrument that assists in the formulation of a consensual, wise policy.
- b. Trust building, changing of opinions and breaking stereotypes – an additional achievement mentioned by many participants at the process summary was their change of opinions, process partners from the third sectors who have become more aware of the need for supervision and regulation and senior position holders in the Ministry of Education who opposed the process at its start. At the end of the process voices from all sectors called out to continue and expand this process to additional similar processes.
- c. Willingness of HQ personnel in the Ministry of Education to promote various matters through an inter-sectorial dialog, believing in combination of forces, opinions and resources.

Process summary

The inter-sectorial Roundtable was held precisely according to plan, except for the addition of the fellows' opinion to the process and the fellow meeting held about the products of the planning teams. The process was made possible by several key elements:

- a. Thorough field/background work, including team members meeting key position holders in the public and third sectors.
- b. The unequivocal support of the Ministry of Education administration for the process itself, as well as for the importance of the move and the inter-sectorial discourse.
- c. Appointment of a person in charge of inter-sectorial programs in the Ministry of Education.
- d. Parallel and supporting processes within the ministry.
- e. A timed process with a clear and concrete definition of missions – preparations for the process lasted about six months, Roundtable and planning teams meetings lasted another six months.
- f. Utilization of methodologies aimed at changing the sectorial perspective, as well as an emphasis on work and progress between meetings through "homework" for the participants. Technologies that allowed sharing among large groups were used for this purpose.
- g. An operating organization, external to the public system, with an expertise and familiarity with government offices, the specific content world and the third sector.
- h. Main criteria in choosing the subject for discourse: a subject of high inter-sectorial potential (with an emphasis on additional involvement of the business sector); a subject that is mentioned in the Ministry of Education's goals; a subject that deals with policy (as opposed to practical tools); a subject with an

- innovative/entrepreneurial character (that provides added value that may not have existed in the office).
- i. Finally, an atmosphere of trust in the process on all levels and in all teams. The trust was built between both the operating organization team and the Ministry of Education team and the Roundtable team and the process participants. The atmosphere of trust in the process and faith in the leading team evolved into an atmosphere of professionalism, optimism and confidence (all this with relatively low chances of success in terms of complexity of the matter and objection from within the ministry).

Alongside the success of the process, several issues must be improved in future processes:

- a. Along with all the advantages of wisdom of crowds, an inter-sectorial, multi-participant process requires investment of many hours by many position holders. This process may not necessarily succeed in reaching a reasonable work hours : products ratio. After laying down the initial trust infrastructure, we must develop simpler, more efficient tools in terms of the number of participants and involvement in core subjects.
- b. The presence of the business sector was relatively insignificant. We must develop tools to connect the business sector to such processes and bring in a larger number of representatives in the initial stages, since their persistence in the process is the lowest.
- c. Pupils should be included in such processes, through the National Student Council.

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Appendix 1 – The Inter-Sectorial Round Table’s recommendations regarding the program pool

Basic Principles

1. The pool will serve as an infrastructure for transparency, equal opportunities and direction of the various partners.
2. The pool is to be established based on wisdom of crowds, it will accumulate knowledge and opinions of various position holders and allow access to them, following authorization and using structured tools, and is open to the public (for viewing, not evaluating).
3. The pool will include programs with a different status (programs coordinated with the ministry and programs with no ministry person of contact) and each program will accumulate opinions from various elements as will later be elaborated.
4. The pool will be managed by the Ministry of Education and according to its policy, will promote programs in specific fields (e.g. programs in the periphery or in special sectors), and will point out fields that are overloaded and fields that are lacking (e.g. content fields and/or age fields, as well as analysis of needs according to different sectors/movements).
5. Decision on the integration of a program will be made on the level of the educational institution, together with additional interested parties, as will be elaborated in the relevant recommendations, by the optimal partnership team.

Work principles

1. The first stage will include registration in the pool of all current operators of education system programs, in the future an acceptance threshold will be determined (for more information see acceptance threshold).
2. Programs of the third sector and of commercial corporations operating within a social activity framework will be registered in the pool (at this stage, programs selling services to the education system as part of commercial activity).
3. Each program will undergo an administrative check, followed by the accumulation of expert opinions of professionals from the field, as well as evaluation data that will allow the users to select an educational program.
4. Ministry programs, or programs developed together with the ministry (a definition of programs held in collaboration with the ministry is currently being phrased by a ministry team), will appear differently in the pool (e.g. different color).
5. A program that will not operate according to the rules and required conditions will be erased from the pool by a designated tri-sectorial committee.
6. Within a year of beginning operation of the pool, programs will not be operated in the education system without being registered in the pool.



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7. The information base will interface the Registrar of Companies and Organizations and GuideStar.

Acceptance Threshold

1. Proper management of non-profit organizations (or beginning of a proper management authentication process) and a corresponding format for business organizations.
2. An affidavit stating that the organization is not operating against the state of Israel or against "educational targets".
3. An affidavit of proper law-abiding conduct.
4. Commitment and affidavit regarding (not) advertising, overtly or covertly, in the education system.
5. Identification in the ministry's system (ICT Department). Each organization will receive a user name and password in order to enter the program system.
6. Provision of up to date, reliable details and information on the organization according to the requirements of the program system.



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