General background –

Among Israeli youth, the phenomenon of "Dropout" from formal schooling that the education system provides is not a new one. It has manifested itself throughout all the years of Israel's existence and even before, ever since the establishment of schooling as a service of the community and the State.

The differences that were found in the context in which the phenomenon appears are usually with regard to the extent of the dropout and the factors that motivate and sustain it: A. In the context of various ages. B. In the context of different locations. C. In the context of the various population groups.

According to Egyed, McIntosh & Bull (1998), the dropout phenomenon was first discussed in the professional literature in 1927. The term used in those days was "School Leavers" as the phenomenon was usually presented as a psychological problem based on personal inclination and cultural environmental interests (Fuller, 1927). School was not regarded by everyone as the principal place for advancing and preparing a child for his adult life roles.

With the passing years, the place of the education system in general and that of school in particular has become the center for the process of preparing the child for adult life and almost a condition of his ability to integrate as a citizen able to contribute to himself and society. Similarly, States took upon themselves the responsibility to implement the right to education and knowledge, a right that is contained in the fundamental rights of many states including Israel. This inviolable and inalienable right provides, by law, the means and possibility of every child in Israel to acquire fundamental education and knowledge. In spite of the socially and politically principled decision of the States to take responsibility for compulsory education, there are still many who dropout in the course of their studies and do not really realize their right to an education.
The Extent of Dropout –

One of the main difficulties that we are faced with nowadays is the ability to quantify the overt dropout phenomenon, to know how many youths are involved. It appears that several methods exist in Israel (and the world) to measure the dropout phenomenon. They are usually a function of how the phenomenon is defined and its quantitative method. At present in Israel there is still no agreement or clear decision on the definition of the phenomenon and its components and there is no methodological or orderly follow up. (Lahav, 2004).

In order to understand the extent of the phenomenon, we can study the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics. We can examine the data (Table of Personnel Survey, 2008) that are informative regarding the percentage of dropouts from the education system before completing their studies.

### 2007 Data of Youths Aged 15 – 17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of Function</th>
<th>Percentage of Youth</th>
<th>Jews</th>
<th>Arabs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students Only</td>
<td>85.9 %</td>
<td>86.3 %</td>
<td>83.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work &amp; Study</td>
<td>5.5 %</td>
<td>7.2 %</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Only</td>
<td>1.4 %</td>
<td>1.1 %</td>
<td>2.2 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Studying or Working</td>
<td>7.2 %</td>
<td>5.5 %</td>
<td>12.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 350,600 Youths

From these data, it appears that in 2007, at the age level 15 – 17, 30,151 youths were not included in the education system of the Ministry of Education, nor within that of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. 7.2 % of them neither studied nor worked and 1.4 % only worked. Compared to the data of the year before, the reduction in the percentage of dropouts was 0.9%, which is 2,747 youths.

A similar measurement problem also exists with regard to the phenomenon of the hidden dropouts. Here too, there is no agreement or clear definition of the phenomenon and the ways of quantifying it and, in spite of making an attempt to do so in the framework of the report of the special parliamentary committee to examine hidden and overt dropout (Navot-Cohen, 2001), no methodical follow up was made thereafter. Still, it is customary to examine the extent of hidden dropout according to the learning results of those who remain in the
system, meaning: how many youths completed 12\textsuperscript{th} Grade and how many of them did not pass the matriculation examinations that, at present, are the only effective tests of learning in the system.

According to this definition it is possible to learn from the report of the Teleprocessing and Information Systems Administration at the Ministry of Education (Matriculation Data, 2008), that out of the youths aged 17 in Israel that number 115,100, only 94,206 which is 81.8% of the age group studied in the 12\textsuperscript{th} Grade. Only 85,581, which is 74.4% took the matriculation examinations. Only 53,325 youths who make up 46.3% of the age level of 17 were actually entitled to a matriculation certificate.

**The Factors that Influence Dropout –**

Many studies have been conducted in Israel and abroad to examine and identify the factors that motivate and encourage dropout and over the years several predominant factors arose that repeated themselves to a different extent and in different forms. But, it was clear that they comprise an influential cause that is not connected to age, location and culture. According to the National Dropout Prevention Center (N.D.P.C. Report, 2007) the factors influencing dropout can be divided into four main categories: A. **Factors Associated with the Individual** (Capability, inclination, deficiency, motivation, etc.). B. **Factors Associated with the Family** (socio-economic background, deficiency, disability and illness, parental dysfunction, immigration, divorce, language etc.). C. **Factors Associated with the School** (a lack of awareness/concern of the teaching staff, a lack of means for professionals/budgets, lack of support programs and functionality assistance, lack of diversity in teaching methods and study courses, a lack of cultural sensitivity, a lack of norms/procedures/boundaries and rules, a lack of response to disciplinary problems, etc.). D. **Factors Associated with the Community** (no significance placed on learning, no extracurricular services or support from communal assistance, a lack of support at school, a lack of coordination and cooperation between organizations, a lack of investment in the systems and in the people involved in development and advancement etc.).

**Strategies to Combat Dropout –**

In face of the multiplicity of factors influencing the "dropout phenomenon" in the education system, the effective way to deal with them was and still is only by combining the various strategies in order to create a solution that will be significant, qualitative and relevant to a varied population with varied requirements. In other words, it is almost impossible to choose just one of the strategies and expect it to function as leverage to diminish the dropout phenomenon. Regrettably, some of the strategies listed below are not employed or are only partially employed in Israel, a situation that demands improvement and correction.

a. **Individual Tutoring –**

This strategy is based on developing a significant personal connection between the "tutor" and the "student", a relationship based on attentiveness and mutual trust, a relationship that creates mutual commitment and makes it possible to identify individual needs, challenges and capacities that are likely to support the development
of the student and his ability to adapt and endure/tolerate school and, particularly, to make the greatest possible use of the significant immediate and future advantages school has to offer.

b. **Broadening the Teaching Services** –
   This strategy is based on the integration of significant community services by means of extracurricular academic studies, something that promotes the advancement of children and youths in the fields of study by means of employing additional significant diverse methods for the individual development and growth of each participant together with the social involvement and responsibility of the community.

c. **The Establishment and Development of Alternative Schools** –
   This strategy encourages the establishment of schools that offer the dropouts from the mainstream education system significant learning alternatives that will provide them with acknowledged and significant certification. These schools will make it possible to address special requirements on the individual level and will allow for personal development and fulfillment in areas of interest and excellence in order to acquire a significant and acknowledged certificate for further studies or integration into the prospective work force.

d. **Development of Post-Study Opportunities** –
   This strategy develops the possibilities of reinforcing learning and/or enrichment in the fields of individual interest and excellence in the hours following the regular school day. These opportunities allow the hidden dropout to find himself in the system in special fields of activity and interest (and not just on the demanding and intensive course of study that he finds difficult to endure and in which he finds it difficult to succeed on his own.)

e. **Concentrated Early Effort in Infant Education**
   This strategy is directed at intervention at the earliest ages – from birth to 3 years old, an important stage that has critical implications on the proper and qualitative consequent development of the child and his ability to integrate and endure the subsequent education system. This is a matter of investment and development of fundamental skills.

f. **The Commitment of the Family to Learning and Success.**
   This strategy is directed at the development of commitment, responsibility and involvement of the family in the learning and developmental life of the child. Numerous studies point out that the involvement and commitment of support and backing by members of the family have direct implications on the child's ability to cope with the challenges of school and finally, this influences his achievements there.
g. *Early Development of Reading and Writing Skills* –
   This strategy is directed at the development of reading and writing skills in the native tongue at an early age. These skills comprise the basis for the ability to learn effectively later on and thus have significant implications on success at school.

h. *Professional Development of the Staff and Teachers* –
   This is a significant investment in the professional development of teachers and staff to work with children and youths at risk. The matter under discussion is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and work methods by children with learning difficulties and the strategies of qualitative differential learning.

i. *The Use of Active Adventure Learning* –
   When teachers use activity and adventure forms of teaching, the students show interest and find a way to make friends, integrate and achieve success in coping with the learning assignments. We speak of a strategy that directs the student to learn how to study with no connection to the actual material being learned, itself.

j. *The Use of Advanced Educational Technologies* –
   This is the intelligent use of advanced technologies to help the student acquire knowledge and skill by means of tools and means that are not necessarily the verbal ones that he is accustomed to. Technologies like these support development of multiple intelligences and make it possible for each individual to find his place and path for progress.

k. *Advancement of Models of Individual Learning* –
   The construction of an individual learning program makes it possible to adapt the methods and learning speed to each child individually and allows maximum flexibility for the teachers and staff to an adjusted learning track that incorporates all the elements that are provided extramurally as a part of recognized education.

l. *Pooling Community Resources* –
   The goal is to create an atmosphere that is supportive to learning and enlist the community's resources to broaden the circle of support for education and for the student and primarily to encourage teaching and the success of the students. Here, we are speaking of the integration of welfare and health services, the third sector (voluntary organizations) and the business sector to produce support systems aimed at individuals, families and communities to promote the education and success of the students.

m. *Vocational and Career Training* –
   The guidance of grown up students towards continuing studies and integration into the work world of the future by creating transition programs that will lead them from school to the work world and prepare them for the future that awaits them beyond school walls.
n. **Creation of a Safe and Protected School Environment**

This strategy deals with the creation of schools protected by a systemic program that reduces the phenomenon of violence and exploitation and encourages an atmosphere of solving problems and diffusing conflicts.

Alongside these pedagogic educational strategies, a special effort is being made in the area of legislation. In the framework of such legislation the State of Israel decided to extend compulsory education to the end of the 12th Grade (it had formerly been till 10th Grade). In the execution of this step, the Ministry prepared for the gradual implementation of the law over a period of a few years (4), so as to include all the youths under the umbrella of compulsory education.

The process will be introduced at three levels of control and implementation at one and the same time: The school level, the community/local authority level and the countrywide level. At each level there is a commitment to include the parents in the decision making and execution processes.

To this end a number components for action were formulated, like:

1. Awareness and responsibility for every mature student
2. The creation of a continuum of frameworks
3. The creation of protective testing for study tracks/certificates
4. The extension of physical infrastructures/personnel (coordinated)
5. The construction of a system of control and monitoring
6. The construction of a educational support system
7. Integrating the work world with the world of education
8. Creating partnerships – parents/community/sectors/

**Services Offered by the Ministry to Cope with the Phenomenon and Dangers of Dropout**

The Ministry of Education operates a full array of programs to advance populations at risk and deal with the phenomenon of dropout that comprises special units dealing with the subject, like the Shachar Department (Education and Welfare Service), The Shefi Department (Psychological and Advisory Service), the Field of Youth Advancement (works to develop and advance educational-therapeutic services to youths aged 14-18 who are at risk of dropping out of the formal frameworks in the community for their age) and the Department of Special Education. These singular programs aimed to reduce gaps and prevent dissociation are operated by the units of the Ministry that run the different age departments: infancy, primary school and high school.
**Conclusion**

The School Drop-Outs phenomenon is one of the most familiar phenomena in the world since the establishment of a school as an educational framework in the community. The Israeli Ministry of Education invests a great effort in the teaching and development of youth until the age of 18, in the school environment. Despite these efforts, a not insignificant percentage drop out of school over the years.

The problem of alienated youth is not based on one factor or variable. It is a complicated and multifaceted social phenomenon that only a spectrum of variables and factors can explain. Also, the status of alienated is not a static one, rather a dynamic and changing one that can be detected, and can lead to numerous life paths.

In order to deal with these phenomena, the Ministry of Education through the Youth and Society Administration, Youth at Risk Advancement Services, has for over 40 years been developing and running social and educational programs for at-risk and alienated youth. These services come from the need to find unique ways of reaching the youth who are not part of the formal school environment. The aim the Ministry of Education set for itself with this program is to "not leave any child behind" and to reach the alienated youth. The method - to build a community based safety net to find and deal with the school drop-outs, with an aim to re-introduce them to a society of their peers, or to find an alternative realistic educational option.

This article presenting values principles and strategies lead the Israeli educational authorities to deal with this drop-out phenomenon with same success.

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### Appendix A - *an Example of Coping with Dropout*

**The Youth Advancement Services for Youths at Risk**

Lahav Chaim 2009

The Ministry of Education operates a "safety net" in the framework of its efforts to deal with youths at risk through of the Field of Youth Advancement unit in the Social and Youth Administration. The "safety net" is spread out in the local authorities and its aim is to locate, identify and treat youths aged 14–18, who have dropped out of the formal educational frameworks (overt dropout), or who have difficulty functioning and adapting to the formal educational framework (hidden dropout).

Services for Youth Advancement operate in 151 local authorities in the various sectors (the Arab sector includes the Bedouin and Druze population, and the Jewish population includes orthodox Jews, immigrants from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia, religious and established). The Service offers: therapeutic-educational guidance to advance youths, supplementary educational services in the community (Hi'la, Supplementary Basic Education at Regional Education Centers), social-educational group activities and vocational courses to develop skills. This service is provided to around 18,000 youths per annum – half of them (9000) are disaffiliated youths who have dropped out of the formal educational system.
The operational frameworks of the Youth Advancement Services in the community include:
units for Youth Advancement in the local authorities, Regional Education Centers (Hi'la),
urban emergency centers for immigrant youths at risk and youth centers for information and advice. Included in the framework of the activities of the Youth Advancement Services outside the community are: villages for disassociated youths (Manof (where teleprocessing is taught to improve learning grades) and Ashbal (an educational-therapeutic program at Kibbutz Ashbal), youth protection frameworks (hostels and residences), drug rehabilitation youth villages, Melchishua and Retorno, juvenile prisons, detention centers and alternative juvenile detention options.

The Target Population includes:
Youths who have dropped out of the education system ("overt dropout") – youths that neither work nor study, those who only work, juveniles who are detained or imprisoned, youths in protective custody and vagrant juveniles who are inclined to take part in antisocial and criminal activity.

Youths at risk within the education system (hidden dropout") – youths who are characterized by high mobility between educational frameworks, studying in "low-grade" special frameworks, which are defined as disassociated and with having adjustment problems, low grades, frequent absenteeism from school and are inclined to hazardous behavior.

Vision and Aspirations:
✓ To be the address (in the framework of the units for Youth Advancement in the Local Authorities) for every disaffiliated young male or female who has dropped out of the education system and requires support, assistance, guidance and advice in order to reintegrate in society and their peer groups.
✓ To assist any disaffiliated young male or female who wishes to return to the education system or study to find the most suitable possible framework and course to follow, or to fulfill their individual educational potential in the framework of the Hi'la (Supplementary Basic Education) program.
✓ To create new opportunities of every disaffiliated young male or female to fulfill their personal potential in fields of excellence and individual interest in diverse areas of life.
✓ To deepen the level of responsibility and commitment of the community and Israeli society to the disassociated youths by placing their special requirements on the public agenda at the public, community, municipal and national levels.

Goals
• "From disassociation to integration" – reintegration of disaffiliated youth in the educational system and the normative activities of their peers, at school, at work, in vocational training, in social activities and service in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces)
• "Advancement and the Realization of Individual Potential"- Compensation and advancement of disaffiliated youths (who are not integrated into normative
frameworks) in the fields of education, social skills and realization of individual potential in vocational and social spheres

- **"Strengthening Affiliation and the Ability to Influence"** - Strengthening the sense of personal capability and social usefulness of youths while encouraging society to acknowledge their abilities and contributions.
- **"Dropout Prevention"** - Reinforcement of factors that promote solidity and prevent endangerment among students at high risk of dropping out while working to maintain the continuum between school, the community and the family.

**Diverse Examples of Programs for Youth at Risk in the Framework of Youth Advancement Services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Youths per annum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ The Hi'la Program (Supplementary Education for Disaffiliated Youths)</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Development of Vocational and Social Skills among Disaffiliated Youth</td>
<td>2,925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Core Programs of Youth Advancement:**

- ✓ Preparation for Military Service                                   2,860
- ✓ Preparation for the Futuristic Work World                          4,465
- ✓ Prevention of Hazardous Behavior                                   7,193
- ✓ Empowerment, Identity and Affiliation                               3,645
- ✓ Integration and Community Involvement                              1,956
- ✓ Shel'ah Geographical Program for Disaffiliated Youths              2,000
- ✓ Traffic Educations (Road Safety)                                   1,780
- ✓ Therapy by means of the arts, drama, music, theater, cinema, Song and dance) 2,714