

# **Arab Israeli Teachers Working in Jewish Schools and Jewish Teachers Working in Arab Israeli Schools**

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## **Background**

In Israel, there is a separation between the Jewish education system and the Arab Israeli education system. The decision for this separation has both practical and ideological explanations. There are those who claim that the demographic realities dictate this separation. However it is revealing that the policy since the founding of the state was to strengthen and preserve the Jewish identity amongst the Jewish sector, and a coming to terms with the national identity of the Arab Israeli pupils. The ideological component is the more important of the two; this is evidenced by the fact that even in places where it would be possible to establish a combined education system, like in mixed cities (Tel Aviv-Yaffo, Haifa, Jerusalem, Acco, Lod, and Ramla), there is a complete separation between the two systems.

This separation exists in every part of the education system although it is the most severe in the State-religious and Haredi education. There it is backed by instructions at the highest level that “advise” in no uncertain terms against the hiring of Arab Israeli teachers.

This reality has many implications both on the educational level and on the overall societal level. On the educational level, it intensifies the fluctuations in supply and demand for teachers due to the limitations it creates in moving from sector to sector. On the

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societal level the main influence is the strengthening of segregation tendencies amongst Jewish and Arab Israeli residents.

### **How the phenomenon was examined**

The researchers had at their disposal the data base of teachers and educational institutions of the Ministry of Education for 2010. In the teacher data base, there is information on age, gender, sector, place of residence, and institution of employment. In the institutional data base, there is full information on the institution. It was possible to combine the two data bases as well as to compare between them. After combining the data bases, it was possible to locate the teachers who classified their sector as Arab Israeli (including Druze, Bedouin and Circassian) and who taught at Jewish schools (the file included teachers who teach at seminaries and other institutions, as well as dual-sector schools that are classified as Jewish). Likewise, teachers classified as Jewish and teaching in Arab Israeli institutions were located.

### **The extent of the phenomenon of cross-sector teaching**

On the face of it, there is no legal or other reason why Arab Israeli teachers should not teach in Jewish institutions and vice versa, although in practice the phenomenon is so minimal that it could be said to not exist. Out of 95,000 Jewish teachers only some 400 teach in Arab Israeli schools, and out of more than 30,000 Arab Israeli teachers, only some 400 teach in Jewish schools.

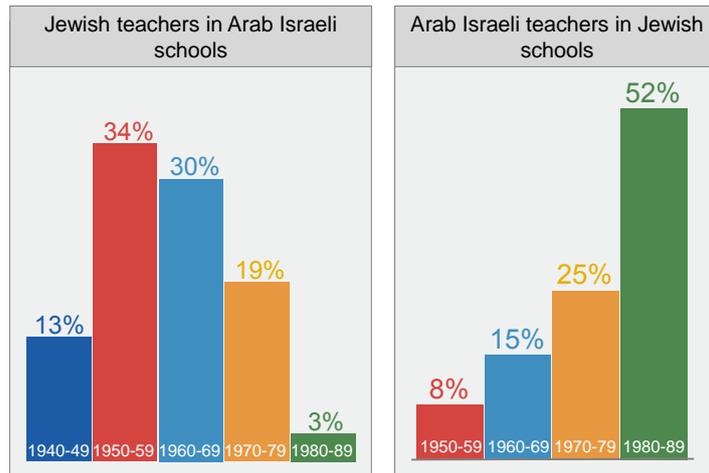
### **Data on the cross-sector teachers**

#### **A. Age**

The study showed that while Jewish teachers teaching in Arab Israeli schools are mostly older (77 percent of them were 44 or older in 2010), Arab Israelis teachers in Jewish schools were

generally younger. Only 23 percent of them were 44 or older (Figure 1).

Figure 1  
Distribution of cross-sectors teachers by age



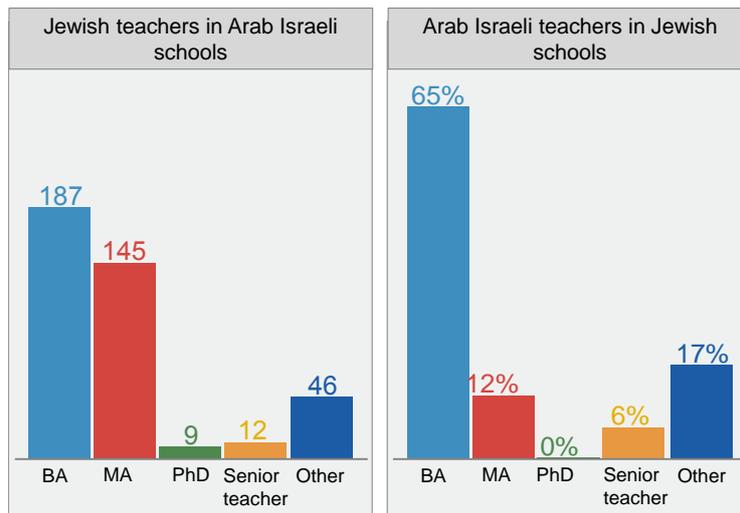
Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel  
Data: Ministry of Education

## B. Academic credentials

The distribution of teachers teaching cross-sector by academic credentials largely parallels the distribution of the population by sector, that is, the majority of teachers have a second or first academic degree (Figure 2). Amongst the Arab Israeli teachers in Jewish schools there are more teachers with a BA, while amongst the Jewish teachers in Arab Israeli schools there are more with a Master's degree. All together the rate of those with a second academic degree is similar (83 percent amongst Jewish teachers in

the Arab Israeli schools, and 77 percent of the Arab Israeli teachers in the Jewish schools).

Figure 2  
Distribution of cross-sectors teachers by academic credentials



Source: Nachum Blass, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel  
Data: Ministry of Education

### C. Grade level

One of the variables examined was at what grade level cross-sector teaching occurs. An interesting finding was that amongst Jewish teachers in Arab Israeli schools as well as among Arab Israeli teachers in Jewish schools, a very high rate teach in institutions that are classified as “other,” that is special education institutions (21 per cent amongst the Arab Israeli teachers and 18 per cent of the Jewish teachers). The apparent explanation is that these institutions

serve a weak population, with special needs, and the level of opposition to staff from a different sector is very low.

#### **D. Positions of cross-sector teachers**

The research showed that the majority of cross-sector teachers are among the general teaching staff. Very few have positions as counselors, and even fewer take senior roles as specialty study or grade level coordinators. Amongst all of the cross-sector teachers there are none who fill administrative roles, except in joint Jewish-Arab Israeli schools.

#### **E. Place of residence and school location**

Jewish teachers teach in Arab Israeli schools more in Tel Aviv, Beer Sheba, Rahat, Abu Ghosh, and Jerusalem. None of these teachers live in the Arab Israeli towns. In contrast, the places where more Arab Israeli teachers are in Jewish schools are Jerusalem, Haifa, Tel Aviv, Carmiel, and Hadera. These Arab Israeli teachers live for the most part in Taybeh, Tirah, Jerusalem, Haifa, and Kfar Kara.

#### **The relationship between cross-sector teaching and the employment of skilled teachers in the Arab Israeli sector**

The issue of the surplus of teachers in the Arab Israeli sector comes up in the public discourse from time to time. According to a Knesset paper, between 7,000 and 12,000 Arab Israeli teachers are unable to find employment. This reality has brought the Ministry of Education to set a special mechanism, which is not in the Jewish system, to integrate Arab Israeli teachers in work.

There are two opposing factors that influence the demand and supply of teachers in the Arab Israeli sector. The scarcity of

sources of livelihood for educated Arab Israelis pushes the young men, and particularly women, to choose the teaching profession, which, on the face of it, assures employment and prestige over other professions. On the other hand, the extension of the Arab Israeli system, and steps taken by the Ministry of Education to narrow gaps in the allocation of school hours and lessening overcrowding in classrooms, require more teachers. Which one of the processes is stronger?

The number of Arab Israeli pupils in teacher training institutions (including preschool teachers) stood at 7,500 in 2008<sup>2</sup>, and there is no reason to assume that this number has changed significantly. About half of these studied in Arab Israeli institutions for teacher training and half in Jewish institutions. Since the majority have studied in 4-year institutions, 1,900 studied per cohort. To this should be added a small number of students who are qualified to teach in universities. In total, it could be said that some 2,000 to 2,200 Arab Israeli teachers with a formal teacher's qualification from an Israeli teacher's institution are added to the pool of Arab Israeli teachers annually.

According to the data of the Central Bureau of Statistics, between 2005 and 2013 more than 9,000 Arab Israeli teachers were added to the education system. If it is taken into consideration that the natural retirement rate in teaching is about 3-4 percent, this requires an additional 1,000 new teachers per year to replace those retiring. In this period of time, an additional 17,000 Arab Israeli teachers joined the system. As a result, on the face of it the number of teachers joining the system over this period was similar to the number needed and so there is no need to speak of a great surplus of trained teachers. In order to reconcile between the macro data and the impressions from the field, it appears that a more in-depth study would be required.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Agbaria, Ayman (2011), *Training Arab Israeli Teachers in Israel: Equality, Recognition and Cooperation*, The Mofet Institute.

In connection to the issue of a possible surplus of teachers in the Arab Israeli sector and ways of overcoming this problem an additional four comments are in order:

- A. The demographic tendency in the near future is a steady increase in the number of Arab Israelis living in mixed towns and in the number of Arab Israeli pupils who will learn in Jewish institutions. This reality will turn the employment of Arab Israeli teachers in Jewish institutions to more readily available.
- B. The size of the country, and the fact that the majority of the Arab Israeli population lives close to large Jewish populations, makes the process relatively easy, and the obstacles are mostly emotional and ideological.
- C. While there are some language difficulties, it is important to remember the teachers who came from the former Soviet Union and the process of their integration into the system, and how they have become the principal part of teaching the sciences and the arts in Israel.
- D. If there is indeed a surplus of Arab Israeli teachers – especially in “neutral” core curriculum subjects like the sciences and English – this would overcome the difficulties of enlarging the Haredi education system in these subject areas.

**In conclusion, if there is or is not a surplus of Arab Israeli teachers, the central point is that removing the obstacles that stand before Arab Israeli teachers in integrating into Jewish institutions and vice versa is not an act of charity but a valuable social and educational message from the system that promotes cooperation and living together in peace.**