

Policy Program Paper

**Internationalization Trends  
in the Israeli Education  
System**

Miri Yemini

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■ Internet edition

# Internationalization Trends in the Israeli Education System

Miri Yemini\*

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Cosmopolitanism doesn't demand great effort, but denying it certainly does (Appiah, 2007)

## *Abstract*

*In recent decades, the education system in the State of Israel has shown signs of substantive change. The decentralization and privatization trends in Israel, as in other countries, have created a heterogeneous and dynamic system, characterized by a variety of forces taking action to change and influence the entire system and its components, from both inside and outside. Globalization, with its economic, political and social aspects, is also fomenting changes in the education system, and these are evident throughout its length and breadth, at all levels.*

*At the same time, the internationalization process in the education system is gathering momentum and drawing increasing attention, in both research and the field of policy. This trend stems*

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*from the connection between the international dimension of education and the education system's need to prepare in order to equip its graduates with the skills and abilities required in the twenty-first century. The internationalization process's centrality to education stems from the desire to train those who study to assume an active citizenship role in a global world. Economic, political, social-cultural and academic considerations encourage governments and institutions in the developed world, as also in developing countries, to take action to promote global processes, international and intercultural, of either national or institutional scope. Nonetheless, as an essentially ethnocentric country, Israel must contend with certain challenges in the internationalization process, the essential goals of which have an international dimension. It is therefore of particular interest to examine the development of the process in the education system in Israel.*

*This policy paper describes recent developments in the area of internationalization in the entire education system, especially in the schools and in the higher education system. It presents a historical survey of the essential developments and major processes in the field, such as the Bologna Process and the international matriculation program and continues with a discussion of the causes of these developments. It also describes the effect of these processes on the education system in Israel and surveys developments in the field in Israel. Lastly, it presents future directions for development and the dilemmas that implementation of the internationalization process entails. It does all this in order to provide researchers, policy makers and the public in the State of Israel with updated information on the international aspect of the education system, with the aim of promoting a sensible and advanced discussion in the Israeli public sphere.*

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## *Introduction*

The term “globalization” serves as a general name for changes in the economy and society stemming from the blurring of borders between states. Among other things, globalization also impacts the education system. Global changes in society and the economy have created a need for public debate and reforms in the education systems of all countries in advanced stages of the modernization process. Several issues are at the focus of such reforms:

A. A need to update learning contents and teaching methods in accordance with changes in the skills required from graduates of the education system, such as teaching the skills required for daily activity in the global and virtual spheres. These skills include familiarity with a variety of languages and cultures, an ability to work as a team with others who are geographically distant, advanced technological skills, and updated tools for finding and retrieving information.

B. Making the system more flexible to adapt it to changes in the routine of life in the wake of globalization. This flexibility must manifest itself in the mobility of those who learn and those who teach, in changes in concepts of time, and in more frequent updating of learning contents. Noteworthy in this context is the concept of “lifelong learning,” which refers to the desirability, perhaps even necessity, of the individual’s continuing the training process and skill enrichment throughout life to adapt to its changing reality.

C. The proliferation of measurement and evaluation methods, in recognition of the need for comparisons, both internally and externally. In recent years there has been an evident rise in the importance of international comparisons of the quality of education system outcomes – including ratings of universities and comparisons of student achievements on international tests. Such comparisons impact the way education systems conduct themselves at both the institutional and national levels. Due to the growing influence of international institutions, and with it

greater transparency for purposes of comparison, there appears to be greater competition and choice as well as the transfer of knowledge from place to place and from country to country, and consequently also a striving for uniformity among educational institutions in a wide range of countries.

Nonetheless, it is important to emphasize that the selfsame globalization gives rise to additional, sometimes contradictory phenomena, such as strengthening nationalism and stressing the local and exceptional rather than the global and universal, in both the education system and society at large. Although stressing local values does not necessarily contradict striving for global standards as a value, in some cases these two values cannot be reconciled and are in conflict. This policy paper approaches that conflict through a focus on the Bologna Process in the higher education system, and on studies towards international matriculation in the schools. Following the theoretical discussion and examination of the existing situation, both worldwide and in Israel, a few of the challenges, some of them unique to Israel, which policy makers in the education system in Israel must contend with, are presented.

## ***1. Internationalization in the Higher Education System***

In recent decades the international dimension of higher education systems has become more central – whether from the perspective of the academic institution or from that of government policy. Plans for cooperation, the internationalization of learning programs, and student and faculty exchanges are no longer a sideline, but rather a major area of engagement for the heads of academic institutions and government policy makers in the field of education. Internationalization has become a powerful proactive process, in contrast to its reactive nature in previous decades (de Wit, 2010). The internationalization process has become a measure of



the quality of an academic institution and the quality of the higher education system in a country, as part of the increasing competition among institutions over students, faculty members and research resources – both locally and on a global scale.

Jane Knight (2004) coined a useful definition of the process, according to which internationalization is a process that combines the international, intercultural and global dimension with the goals of an organization, its functioning and activities. This definition encompasses a variety of the process's aspects at the institutional level: internationalization, as per Knight's definition, is a major process that occurs throughout an organization's length and breadth and can manifest in any dimension of its endeavor.

Originally, academic institutions were international in essence and characterized by a common academic language (Latin) and the constant movement of students and faculty members among them (Knight and de Wit, 1999). During the colonial era models of the higher education system in developed countries were imported into developing countries. For example, the higher education system in India was shaped according to the British Empire model; in South America it drew upon the model imported from Spain; and in Africa the higher education system followed various European models. Today, many academic institutions are again striving towards internationalism and achieving that aim in a variety of ways, for example by establishing affiliate branches of leading academic institutions from developed countries in developing countries; introducing international learning programs; encouraging the mobility of students and faculty; and conducting international studies, i.e., studies in which both the researchers and participants come from several countries, the financing is international, and the research has the potential to impact the population of the entire world.

The internationalization process offers many advantages to students, faculty members and those with an interest in the higher education system, alongside some drawbacks and challenges that must be examined separately:

A. “Brain drain”: a major challenge in the context of internationalization. The opening of borders and encouragement of international mobility have sometimes led to the unidirectional flow of outstanding students and faculty members from developing countries to developed countries.

B. Cumbersome and expensive bureaucratic processes: The ambition to achieve an international certification system may be to the detriment of academic institutions, as they will be forced to deal excessively with bureaucratic issues, burden their administrative systems, and sometimes even essentially empty the learning of its content in order to obtain the desired certification.<sup>1</sup>

C. Cultural and socioeconomic domination by the educational systems of developed countries: The fear is that the educational systems of developed countries, especially the English-speaking ones, will take over the educational systems of other countries. Such domination is liable to disrupt the harmony of the system and lead to the loss of its multicultural foundation. In such case, even the uniformity that is achieved will not add anything to academic innovation, the important quality which characterizes research and teaching at many institutions of higher education around the world.

Even though most of those with an interest in the process think that the advantages of internationalization outweigh its drawbacks, a thorough investigation of the possible disadvantages at all levels of activity is required in an attempt to overcome them. This should be done, of course, alongside an understanding of the process’s advantages on both a national and international scale.

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<sup>1</sup> In this context, note for example that an institution in Europe that wants to be certified by the European Commission is required to undertake extensive structural and administrative changes.

## 1. *The Bologna Process*

A series of meetings between ministers of education and higher education from European countries yielded the mutual outcome known as the “Bologna Process,” the aim of which is to create a common European higher education area.<sup>2</sup> In 1999, 29 European countries signed the “Bologna Convention,” which calls for the modernization of the higher education system in Europe. The convention focuses on three main processes: a) providing opportunity to study at institutions of higher education towards three separate degrees (first, second and third) in three separate learning circles; b) developing a uniform system for evaluating the quality of higher education institutions; and c) fair recognition<sup>3</sup> of students’ previous academic studies by higher education institutions in the common European area.

The following are the detailed goals of the Bologna Process, as formulated in the “Leuven Declaration” (Leuven, 2009) and ratified by the “Bucharest Declaration” (2012): a) ensuring the overall quality of higher education institutions; b) adopting the program for common “learning circles” towards academic degrees; c) promoting the mobility of students, faculty members and administrative staff between academic institutions; d) instituting a uniform system for the recognition (accreditation)<sup>4</sup> of previous academic studies; e) recognition of comparable learning levels; f) encouraging active involvement in the Bologna Process by higher education institutions, lecturers and students; g) promoting the European dimension in higher education around the world; h) promoting the attractiveness of the higher education system in Europe; i) promoting a European higher education area and European

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<sup>2</sup> EHEA: European Higher Education Area.

<sup>3</sup> The term “fair recognition,” as opposed to “general recognition,” in effect represents the goal of developing a uniform evaluation system to compare the learning in a range of institutions and countries, in the hope of facilitating the integration of students in higher education institutions when moving from one country to another.

<sup>4</sup> ECTS: European Credits Transfer System.

research area as two elements of the information society; and, j) encouraging lifelong learning.

At present, 47 countries<sup>5</sup> and other interested parties, including the European Union, Council of Europe, Federation of European Employers, European University Association (EUA), and European Student Union (ESU), are signatories to the Bologna Convention. Every two years a meeting is held of the ministers of education and higher education of the countries participating in the process, in order to discuss its advancement. These meetings began in Bologna in 1999, and have since taken place in Prague (2001), Berlin (2002), Bergen (2005), London (2007), Lyons (2009), Vienna and Budapest (2010), and Bucharest (2012).

In the framework of the Bologna Process, plans have been drawn up to bring into the process neighboring countries that are not as yet involved, with financing from the European Union. One of these plans is TEMPUS,<sup>6</sup> a project fundamentally aimed at advancing the modernization of the higher education systems in countries neighboring Europe. It began in 1990 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, and over time it has been extended to the Middle East and Central Asia. Israel joined the fourth round of the project in 2008. In tandem with Israel's joining the TEMPUS program,<sup>7</sup> the Council for Higher Education (CHE) established a forum of experts in the field of higher education, which is part of the international forum of experts in the field from countries neighboring Europe and experts on the Bologna Process from European

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<sup>5</sup> Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Britain, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, and the Vatican.

<sup>6</sup> TEMPUS: Trans-European Mobility Program for University Studies.

<sup>7</sup> The Council for Higher Education launched a TEMPUS-Israel office with financing from the European Union.

countries. The forum convenes in a range of professional levels all over Europe, and its purpose is to inform the academic community about the Bologna Process and track its implementation. Over the years academic institutions in Israel have been increasing their participation in the TEMPUS program.<sup>8</sup>

With the rising awareness of the centrality of the Bologna Process in recent years in Israel, many academic institutions are examining what implementation of the process elements at a local scale would entail. An indication of that growing awareness is the participation of academic institutions from Israel in submitting projects for approval in the framework of the process.

Table 1. **Number of projects submitted for approval in the framework of the Bologna Process with the participation of Israeli academic institutions**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Projects with participation of Israeli institutions</b>	<b>Projects coordinated by Israel</b>
2008	9	2
2009	11	3
2011	18	7

Source: Miri Yemini, Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel  
Data: EACEA

<sup>8</sup> Israel is not entitled to submit a request to join the process, for in accordance with the “Berlin Communiqué” (2003) submitting a request is conditional upon signing the European Cultural Convention. Israel nonetheless submitted official requests to join the process in 2007 and 2008.

Another measure of the growing centrality of the Bologna Process in the higher education system in Israel is the proliferation of project proposals submitted for approval in the framework of the TEMPUS program. At first, most of the proposals came from the universities, whereas recently most of the proposals have been submitted by non-university institutions, such as unbudgeted colleges and budgeted academic colleges. In the past year, the teaching colleges have also joined those submitting proposals. Today the main participants in the program in Israel are colleges and not universities, for several reasons. First, most of the universities in Israel are already active in the international arena in a variety of ways, mainly cooperative studies, advanced studies for faculty members on sabbatical abroad, and through receiving international research grants. Second, most of the universities in Israel have programs in English designed for students from abroad, as well as student exchange programs based on agreements between institutions or on membership in international umbrella organizations. On the other hand, in their conception and conduct, colleges focus on the local aspect due to their considerable engagement in teaching, low involvement in research, and low access to connections with international academic institutions relative to universities. For example, most colleges do not offer regular advanced studies abroad to faculty members on sabbatical. The universities in Israel take little action in the framework of the TEMPUS program, as they see some drawbacks in this program and those like it. The main drawback is the programs' lack of emphasis on research. Among other things, the program deals with the internationalization of teaching and bringing it closer to the Bologna Process from an institutional aspect, not with research, which may impact the receipt of funding. Other drawbacks, from the universities' perspective, include the cumbersome bureaucracy at the project's submission and administrative stages, and the makeup of the countries participating as members in the project alongside the European partners. Besides Israel, these are all developing countries the quality of whose higher education systems is much lower than the quality in Israel – in terms of both the research

product and the prestige of the degrees granted by the academic institutions.

In contrast, in the framework of the revolution taking place in recent years in the academic colleges in Israel there is a greater focus on research, and hence the international aspect has become more central for them – whether in the research arena, or as a means of enhancing the institution's brand and developing a competitive advantage. It is no wonder, then, that courses taught in English, student exchange programs and innovative study programs in the framework of European programs elicit a willing response to participate in the TEMPUS project from Israeli colleges.

Today, all the academic institutions in Israel take the internationalization process into account. Most are preparing their steps to advance the process on an institutional scale, such as requiring at least one course to be taken in English, encouraging student exchanges and developing international programs.

Nonetheless, the Council for Higher Education has not yet determined its official position on the Bologna Process, or regarding everything that concerns the internationalization of the higher education system. This state of affairs also carries over to the conduct of institutions, giving rise to inconsistent patterns of conduct in a variety of types of institutions. Likewise, the lack of decision generates uncertainty and an inability to advance important steps at the national level and at the institutional level. It follows that Israel's taking a position with regard to the Bologna Process is crucial to advancing the country's higher education system.

In the context of the Bologna Process and joining the European higher education area, it is important to note Israel's activity in the European research area and the country's active participation in research programs in this framework from 2000 onward. Discussions concerning Israel's joining the European research area were greeted with a measure of skepticism by Israeli policy makers, as participation, which permits competing over research grants in a wide range of European frameworks,

requires the country to pay high membership fees.<sup>9</sup> A decade after Israel's entry into the European research area, however, winning such grants seems to have become highly prestigious for Israeli academic researchers, and academic institutions afford considerable support to researchers as an incentive for them to compete in this framework. According to the 2012 data, the research grants won by Israeli academic and industrial bodies amounted to 122 million euros – considerably more than the membership fees in the European Union, which came to only 70 million euros. Nonetheless, even in the current discussions on the next round of the European Union's research and development plan (Horizon 2020), government ministries in Israel are reexamining the desirability of participation, in light of the recent budgetary constraints. It bears mention that the future plans of the European Union call for a closer link between the European research area and the European higher education area, so if Israel fails to formulate a clear policy regarding the higher education area and its practical importance, in accordance with the teaching standards set by the Bologna Process, the country is liable to also be harmed in the research arena.

#### *Advantages of Israel's Fully Joining the Bologna Process*

Should Israel make greater efforts in an attempt to come into closer correspondence with the Bologna Process? To answer this question, the benefit that actually joining the process would yield the country must be examined. If the conclusion is that joining the process is undesirable for the system, then alternative forms of action must be proposed. The following section presents the advantages that Israel would enjoy if it joined the Bologna Process (from Yemini and Ben-Artzi, 2013).

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<sup>9</sup> In 2012, Israel paid 70 million euros for its participation in the research and development plan (according to "Hayadan" website: [hayadan.org.il/eu-prizes-171012/](http://hayadan.org.il/eu-prizes-171012/)).



**Enhanced access.** If Israel adopts the stages of the process and provides its degree recipients with the documentation (certificates, appendices and permits) required by the European regulations, degree recipients would enjoy much greater access to higher education institutions in Europe relative to the present situation. That accessibility would be an incentive to students working towards all degrees to improve their studies by means of a partial or full stay at European academic institutions. In the developing global economy, enhanced access provides far-reaching advantages to those who become part of the process, learn a foreign language, and familiarize themselves with the uses of laboratories, libraries and working methods practiced in Europe and other countries. It should be emphasized in this context that the more the process develops, the greater the preference will be for certificate and degree holders who meet accepted European standards. More than for complete degrees, there will be demand for partial studies in European institutions, which will enable advanced study in subjects not taught in Israel and will also encourage cooperation and joint research.

Access to the European labor market will also increase. As the process widens, eventually only those holding documentation that meets the requirements of the process – either for the professional diploma itself, or with regard to the quality of the academic institution – will be eligible to enter into tenders for public offices. In conditions of an increasingly border-crossing economy, the competitiveness of the Israeli system's graduates will be determined mainly by their ability to meet the threshold requirements of the Bologna Process. Although enhanced access to the European market may indeed accelerate the "brain drain" process, it should be remembered that with increasing globalization no bureaucratic or regulatory obstacle appears able to stop that flow, especially as regards an educated labor force that sometimes also holds European passports. It is important to note that the accessibility and range of choice that the Bologna Process offers will gradually spread beyond the borders of Europe. Already, such countries as China, Australia and the United States are closely watching the process and moving towards it in a variety of

ways. The range of choice and accessibility will therefore be global and not limited to Europe.

Enhanced access in the wake of the Israeli higher education system's adoption of the Bologna Process is important mainly for the lower socioeconomic strata, the country's geographic periphery, and for students from the margins of society and the economy in Israel. This is because the higher socioeconomic classes already show sufficiently active participation in the global system – from English-speaking summer camps abroad, through private lessons and other enrichment classes in the course of high school studies, to studies at higher education institutions abroad. The real challenge is to integrate the margins of society into that mobility. The process has to be simplified, the doors opened, and access to scholarships in international programs increased,<sup>10</sup> in order to reduce the widening socioeconomic gaps in Israeli society and to expand the global economic pie for all segments of the population.

**Opening Israel's gates to students from abroad.** In the wake of fully joining the process, Israel will become a magnet drawing students from abroad. This development is expected to have many important positive effects on academia and the economy, perhaps also on Israel's political standing. The reputation and high quality of the academic environment in Israel may contribute to the arrival of students seeking advanced degrees, thus the state would derive the full benefit from something that already gives it a relative advantage in the world economy. The tuition fees paid by foreign students may to some degree improve the finances of the higher education institutions in Israel. Furthermore, the connection between academia and the Israeli high-tech sector may turn Israel into a powerhouse in the field and give rise to a positive circular effect: the arrival of students and researchers will fan the interest of investors, generating an incentive to develop the academic infrastructure with its many economic advantages. The difficulty of teaching in English is less with regard to students studying towards advanced degrees, and this will

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the Erasmus Program.

also strengthen the trend towards offering coursework for the first degree in English. Furthermore, many universities and colleges in Israel have independently instituted programs and courses in the English language as an integral part of their requirements for a degree. Today, participants in such programs as Erasmus and Erasmus Mundus<sup>11</sup> can choose among hundreds of courses at universities in Israel that are conducted in English, and this selection is sure to grow. Today, thousands of students from abroad are staying in Israel, but most of them attend defined programs that are limited in their number of participants, such as medical studies or partial studies that give credits recognized by their home universities, primarily in the United States. Despite its potential, full learning mobility does not yet exist in Israel.

**Academic quality.** The academic institutions in Israel feature a very high quality of study, and the State of Israel boasts many scientific achievements; nonetheless, worldwide competition is constantly intensifying. An important measure in the world ranking of universities is the number of foreign faculty members and students. It also seems that in many countries one of the important factors in everything that concerns advancing scientific achievements is internationality: a growing number of students come to study in other countries to broaden their vistas and establish future social networks. The same is true for many academic faculty members and researchers who bring fresh ideas into the system. Aspiring to excel and be accepted, these researchers contribute to creating an atmosphere of achievement: they inevitably contribute to raising the academic quality, enhancing the academic prestige and, ultimately, the reputations of the Israeli higher education institutions in their home countries. The mobility that the Bologna Process creates is not an end in itself, but a powerful tool for improving the entire system. Also important is the process's requirement that academic quality be evaluated by bodies

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<sup>11</sup> The Erasmus Mundus Program for the promotion of mobility and academic cooperation between European countries and neighboring countries, which Israel has participated in since 2009.

independent of the government and regulators – in Israel, the Committee for Planning and Budgeting (CPB) and the Council for Higher Education (CHE) – because setting such a bar for testing quality is supposed to stimulate the institutions of higher education to aspire to meet the conditions posed for them.

**Cosmopolitan affiliation.** The Bologna Process has become a very important staging arena in the context of the higher education map in the world. For several years, the leaders of the process have been maintaining contacts with leaders of counterpart systems located far beyond Europe's borders. For example, China regularly sends an observer to attend crucial gatherings in the process; the United States is assessing joining the process, and is already trying to implement parts of it; and integration in the process is being contemplated and examined even in faraway Australia. The process and its components, then, are assuming global importance, and in the spirit of the global economy: "If you aren't there – you don't exist." Widening the process will impact a series of secondary fields, primarily employment in the public sector, and give rise to agreed upon international standards. Despite the importance of integrating into the process at the earliest possible opportunity, the Council for Higher Education still has not taken a decision concerning Israel's integration, neither has it properly examined the importance of taking a decision in the matter.

Among the other challenges that face the leaders of higher education in Israel are imparting information about the process and having the necessary tools in the higher education institutions to implement it. Although awareness of the process among the institutions' administrations has grown to a certain degree in recent years, many academic faculty members in Israel are still not aware of the process or its significance, scope and intensity.

### *Drawbacks of Joining the Bologna Process*

A lively debate over the substance and advantages of the Bologna Process continues in Europe to this day. Participating in that debate are countries

and institutions, as well as faculty members and students. The claims at the focus of this criticism deal with several aspects:

**Loss of the local flavor and cultural fabric of some countries.** This criticism of joining the process focuses on the claim that English serves as the *lingua franca* of the European Union, and as the bridge between speakers of a variety of languages, it is replacing other languages and other cultures, as well. The counterclaim points to the accelerated dominance of English as a phenomenon that is not exclusive to the Bologna Process, but happening in many other contexts and stemming mainly from a combination of several trends, foremost among them technological developments, the impact of internet use and globalization processes. In addition, according to opponents, the basic factor behind this “takeover” by English is its use as the language of diplomacy.

**Bureaucratic overload.** Some argue that the Bologna Process requires investment in a uniform and structured system, entailing a huge bureaucratic burden to be shouldered by the institutions and the regulatory agencies. Although this claim may be true, the purpose of a uniform and structured system that recognizes what is being done at another institution, sometimes in another country, is precisely to ease the bureaucratic load. In effect, the responsibility is transferred from the individual – the student lacking means and often limited in the ability to contend with institutions – to the well-oiled system, whose main aim is to benefit its members, and which has a fundamental interest and is unbiased in its concern for the student’s academic advancement.

**Uncertainty regarding the future map of world domination.** Proponents of this claim have reservations regarding the process not in the restricted context of higher education, but in the context of the global socioeconomic system. They are afraid of what lies ahead against the background of the grave economic crisis in Europe – a crisis that threatens the stability of the European bloc, including the future of the common higher education system and its corollaries, such as the Bologna Process. If the allocation of funds for advancing the implementation of

such a process in the member countries is cut, it is liable to lead to far-reaching changes and perhaps even cancellation of the process.

Furthermore, opponents argue that the dominance of world powers such as China and India in the higher education system will intensify in the coming decades. Therefore, the question concerning their participation in these processes will, to a large extent, determine the scale of their growing strength.<sup>12</sup>

In that context, the policy recommendation is to further familiarize the heads of the system and the institutions with the importance and arrangements of the Bologna Process, as well as to perform an orderly examination regarding Israeli policy towards the process. These actions will enhance Israel's standing in the European research area, and improve the Israeli student's position in relation to the world arena and the position of the higher education system in Israel in relation to the local and global arenas.

## ***2. Additional Challenges to the Israeli Higher Education System in the International Context***

### ***A. Accessibility Versus Excellence***

In the past two decades the higher education system in Israel has seen dramatic development, the highlight of which is the mass expansion in the number of students attending a wide variety of higher education institutions, including academic colleges. This development reflects the essential change that has taken place in the nature of the higher education

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<sup>12</sup> In Israel there is increasing awareness of the trend of dominance by the world powers in the higher education system, and in recent years a turn by the state towards Asia is evident, together with the existing inclination towards the United States. Two representative examples in this context are the agreement on student mobility signed by Israel and the Chinese government, and the research grants allocated specifically for academic cooperation with Indian researchers.

system in Israel: if in the past the system was based mainly on universities whose focus was on research, today it is characterized by decentralization and diversification. To illustrate this, in the 2011-2012 academic school-year there were 67 higher education institutions active in Israel: seven research universities, an open university, 36 academic colleges<sup>13</sup>, and 23 teaching colleges.

The trend of rapid and very considerable expansion in the number of students had already begun in the 1990s. In the wake of great demand for academic studies, and the opening of new higher education institutions in response to this demand, there was a sharp rise in the number of those attending higher education institutions – from 76,000 in the 1989-1990 academic school-year to more than 300,000 in 2001-2002. This process of growing accessibility and an increase in the number of students gathered momentum at the same time as the research universities were experiencing deep budget cuts.<sup>14</sup> In light of that, one of the major questions for the higher education system is how to contend with the challenge of maintaining the system's quality in the face of enhanced accessibility. This question is relevant to the higher education system in its entirety and – in the international context – to its ability to adequately prepare graduates capable of competing in the dynamic global world of the twenty-first century. The issue of accessibility versus excellence has arisen in most of the developed countries and is not unique to Israel. It demands dealing with a complex challenge that requires the planning of long-term goals and outputs, and primarily requires defining policy on the major issues, such as the aims of the entire system, the meaning of the difference between colleges and universities, and the substance of training.

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<sup>13</sup> Twenty-one of the academic colleges are funded by the Committee for Planning and Budgeting of the Council for Higher Education.

<sup>14</sup> The term the “lost decade” that was coined in the spirit of that era illustrates the budgetary constraints into which the research universities fell at the time.

### ***B. Movement of Brainpower***

Some agencies in Israel are dealing with “the return of brainpower.” The issue is being examined in depth in the framework of deliberations by the Committee for Planning and Budgeting of the Council for Higher Education, as well as by the government in the frameworks of the “Centers of Excellence Program” and the six-year plan for the advancement of the higher education system in Israel “On the Path to Growth.” The Israeli Academy of Sciences operates a contact center on behalf of Israeli researchers around the world, in the framework of which a list is published of new academic positions in Israel. Additionally, in the wake of cooperation among the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, the Committee for Planning and Budgeting, and the Ministry of Aliyah and Immigrant Absorption, a new framework has been established that is active in bringing scientists back to Israel. Likewise, Israeli higher education institutions engage in extensive international activity abroad, exemplified by the establishment of shared campuses, such as the joint research institute of the Technion and Cornell University in New York, or academic cooperation with academic institutions abroad, such as the cooperation between Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Botswana University.

Israel’s definition as a Jewish state, alongside being defined as a democratic one, has a considerable impact on the brain-drain phenomenon. For example, the immigration laws in Israel do not include the essential incentives that might encourage quality multi-national manpower to occupy academic positions. Furthermore, although Israel tends to encourage advanced academic studies by Israeli students abroad, by definition it does not allow real movement and mobility of brains in the opposite direction. Study abroad is also considered an emotionally charged issue, hence, for example, there is no official database compiling all the information on those studying abroad, as opposed to the detailed data on everything that concerns students in Israel. According to publications by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2012), estimates are that Israeli students of higher



education attend foreign schools mainly in Canada (6%), Germany (8.9%), Hungary (4.5%), Italy (8.5%), the United States (15%), Russia (3.5%), and Britain (4%). According to the same source (OECD, 2012), in Israel there are hardly any study programs in English designed specifically for students from abroad. Developing such programs may encourage students from abroad to study in Israel towards their first degree.

In light of the increasing globalization and internationalization in the higher education system, and in light of the demographic changes in Israel alongside complex political and social processes, it appears that the brain drain, which is reflected in the unidirectional movement of scientists and students from Israel overseas, will remain at the focus of dilemmas facing policy makers in the Israeli higher education system in the future as well.

### *C. Postdoctoral Advanced Studies and Integration of Academic Faculty Issues*

The admission of Israeli researchers to the regular track at universities in Israel requires, almost necessarily, postdoctoral advanced studies at leading academic institutions abroad. Young Israeli researchers, therefore, engage in advanced studies mainly at academic institutions in the United States. Sometimes the universities also require researchers to have taken doctoral studies abroad, especially in the faculties of the humanities and social sciences. This requirement might not be dictated by the university rules or posed as a condition in publications of the CHE, but it is nonetheless an unwritten law, and students aiming to develop an academic career are well aware of it. Academic institutions in Israel that are not universities are more lenient in this matter, and may appoint researchers even if the latter have not taken postdoctoral advanced studies abroad. Nonetheless, in recent years the colleges, too, have begun to view studies abroad as an important component in their considerations regarding the absorption of researchers.

This requirement is anchored in a historical context, since the academic affiliation of the founders of the first higher education institutions in Israel, the Technion in Haifa and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, was with the academic world in Europe and the United States. When the initial infrastructure for higher education in Israel was laid down, the researchers sought to ensure their personal and their system's rights to maintain contacts and conduct mutual research with their colleagues around the world in a variety of ways, including funds for international scientific relations, a sabbatical year abroad, and grants for postdoctoral advanced studies. With these demands, academicians from Israel were able to ensure their integration within the world's scientific circles, and today many researchers at academic institutions in Israel regularly participate in international research studies and international research groups. These close contacts, as well as the ability of Israeli researchers to stand at the forefront of research in almost every field, are acknowledged to crucially contribute to Israeli academe's robust international standing.

The requirement for postdoctoral advanced studies abroad stems from the desire to secure an international network that will accompany young researchers over the course of their academic careers. It also improves the quality of research in Israel and makes it more relevant around the world. The widespread assumption is that a sojourn abroad opens a window to a broader academic world, allows exposure to diverse academic and research approaches, and increases the chances of future cooperative ventures and of receiving grants from international foundations. However, despite the great importance of studies abroad, due to the reality in Israel a few reservations need be noted in this context. First, importantly, access to postdoctoral advanced studies is limited to economically well-off populations due to the high cost of living abroad. Second, due to the relatively advanced age of students in Israel (most of whom have served in the army for at least two or three years), at the end of their doctoral studies they already have families and tend to be less mobile. Since studies abroad by those who have families usually entails

the entire family moving abroad, the partners of those engaging in advanced studies frequently must give up their own professional careers in Israel in order come along for the extended study time abroad.

From one aspect, the flow of doctoral degree-holders to leading institutions abroad leaves the research groups in Israel without highly-trained manpower – a significant obstacle to these groups in their global competition with leading research groups abroad. In effect, the structure of the higher education system in Israel does not enable academic institutions to rely on their own postdoctoral students – due either to the lack of designated positions for this population of researchers, or to the fact that the best doctoral graduates are forced to move to other countries, as postdoctoral advanced studies in Israel decrease their chances of finding an academic position. On the other hand, among Israeli academic faculties there are hardly any faculty members from other countries, which stems, as mentioned, from the immigration laws unique to Israel, foremost among them the Law of Return, as well as from the restriction posed by Hebrew as the teaching language in Israel (see next section).

Policy makers at the national level and at the institutional-university level have to examine the alternatives and find a system-wide solution to the postdoctoral advanced studies issue. Such a solution is needed both for the research groups in Israel and for the postdoctoral students themselves. Policy makers must consider the allocation of additional designated postdoctoral job positions in the universities for quality doctoral graduates, making it possible to host outstanding postdoctoral students from other countries,<sup>15</sup> as well as technology-based and other alternatives for conducting postdoctoral advanced studies in Israel for Israeli students. Likewise, academic job positions must be allocated to prevent the possible integration of those students in the country's academic institutions.

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<sup>15</sup> A first sign of such activity is the study agreement with China, which the chairman of the Committee for Planning and Budgeting has been promoting in recent months.

#### *D. The Language of Instruction at Institutions of Higher Education*

The debate over the language of instruction at higher education institutions in Israel is a long-standing one. It began in the first decade of the previous century with the plans for the establishment of the Technion and its adjacent upper secondary school in Haifa. Some of the Technion's founders and the philanthropists who contributed to it thought that the language of instruction should be German. They argued that the nature of the institution and the plans for it required schoolbooks that already existed in German, therefore teaching should be conducted in that language as well. On the other side, officials of the Zionist Federation thought that Hebrew should be the primary instruction language at the new institution. The bitter debate, which was dubbed "the war of the languages" in the higher education field of the nascent Zionist state, even delayed the opening of the Technion and led to the resignation of some of its leading proponents. Eventually the decision was made that Hebrew would be the language of instruction at the Technion, and following this, Hebrew became the primary language of instruction at many other institutions.

In recent years the debate over "the war of the languages" has again arisen: many academic institutions, with the Technion ironically at their head, are promoting study programs conducted in English. These are designated programs for students from abroad, although certain interested parties are actively promoting studies in English also in programs designated for Israeli students in all the academic institutions and in studies towards all degrees. One example of such efforts is the opening of a business administration study program in English at the Technion, which sparked considerable media interest and public criticism.<sup>16</sup>

In the contemporary academic world, English is the *lingua franca* not only in research, but also in teaching, especially toward advanced degrees. The dominance of English is constantly increasing, and an

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<sup>16</sup> [haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1799127](http://haaretz.co.il/news/education/1.1799127).

organized policy should be considered, at both the institutional and the national level, regarding academic needs in general, and as part of assessing the significance of Israel's integration in the Bologna Process in particular.

### *E. Directions of Development for Colleges*

The internationalization processes impact the Israeli higher education system at several levels. While the 1990s were characterized by a profusion and widening of the system, today there is evidence of institutional development processes mainly in the public and private colleges. The most widespread contemporary trend is the horizontal expansion of the colleges who are keen to develop study tracks, departments and faculties in many diverse fields of study, in tandem with vertical expansion – the development of programs for advanced degrees such as second degrees without a dissertation, second degrees with a dissertation, and doctorates. There seems to be a direct correlation between the expansion processes and the stiff competition over students and over new faculty members in the higher education field, and the heads of the colleges believe that this two-directional expansion – horizontal and vertical – will help them in that competition. The heads of the colleges are eager to see their institutions “universitized,”<sup>17</sup> and have openly declared as much (Cohen, Yemini, and Sadeh, 2013). In step with the expansion of study programs, there is an appreciable rise in the extent of research and in competition over research grants among the colleges. These two trends stand in mutual relation to the internationalization processes in the system: they are influenced by these processes and in turn influence them.

In the research field, the colleges – especially those that are not state funded – enjoy considerable autonomy in running the institution and in

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<sup>17</sup> The process whereby the colleges are made more similar to the universities from such aspects as budgeting and their faculty members' employment conditions, research, and the diversity of their study programs.

curricula, as well as budgetary flexibility. The colleges also appeal to target audiences outside Israel, and some offer international programs that are in demand in which dozens of students from abroad are enrolled, such as the international programs offered by the Herzliya Interdisciplinary Center or the program for foreign students offered in the academic track by the College of Management Academic Studies. Although most of the universities already have programs for foreign students, in the college landscape this is a new and exceptional phenomenon. In the future it seems likely to grow and represent a greater portion of these institutions' activities.

In recent years the colleges have been working to promote the research by their faculty members, and in that context there is also growing competition over research grants from national and international foundations. In the future, the colleges seem likely to be even more active among the international foundations, since the local foundations, mainly the Israel Science Foundation, in focusing on basic research rather than applied research, which is more common in the colleges. The international activity of the colleges is likely to increase, since the growing research activity of their faculty members influences the rest of the institution's activities.

#### ***F. Where Do Arab Israeli Students Study?***

According to unofficial figures, between 7,000 and 10,000 students from the Arab Israeli sector choose to join the higher education system in Jordan instead of attending higher education institutions in Israel.<sup>18</sup> Many others study at institutions in the Palestine Authority and in countries of Eastern Europe. Since there are no official figures, this raises several important questions, such as the question of bias in the figures for student rates in the higher education system among the Arab Israeli sector relative to the Jewish sector. Clearly any comparison of the student rate toward a first degree in the Jewish sector, most of whom attend academic

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<sup>18</sup> [globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000278616](http://globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000278616).

institutions in Israel, and their rate in the Arab Israeli sector will be biased due to the unaccounted for high rate of Arab Israeli students studying abroad. By the same token, this phenomenon must be kept in mind when examining the official publications of the Council for Higher Education, according to which only 11.3 percent of students in Israel are of Arab Israeli origin, a figure that ostensibly points to the rather low participation of the Arab Israeli sector in academic life relative to their share in the population (about 21 percent) (CHE, 2012). Also meriting examination is the question regarding the significance and effect of the “imported” degrees (degrees earned in Jordan or other countries) on the Israeli employment market (Arar, 2011). Does this phenomenon contribute to the Israeli economy? Do the studies abroad benefit the Arab Israeli public or do it a disservice? How does this process influence Arab Israeli society? Upon examination, it is found that most of this student population studying abroad consists of young men. They sometimes meet life partners during their studies and return to Israel with families, something that impacts the fabric of life in their social environment. Another important question is whether the many Arab Israeli students studying abroad acquire any or all of the cultural values of the countries where they are studying. These questions and many others need to be examined and characterized.

### *3. Internationalization in the Schools*

Much has been written about the progress of the Israeli education system in the second decade of the twenty-first century, as well as the changes in the school environment that are needed to accomplish the new challenges facing the education system. Many reforms and plans have already been implemented, and many others are supposed to materialize in the future in order to connect Israeli students to the dynamic global world around them. One of the major changes in the learning environment in recent decades is the assimilation of technology into the education system –

primarily as teaching aids, such as online learning, in collaborative learning and demonstrations, as well as advanced technology studies, primarily robotics and nanotechnology. Although the integration of technology in the education system and the proliferation of internet use have changed the modes of teaching in class beyond recognition, and despite the globalization processes in the world, studies in the schools have to a great extent remained “local” (Yemini, 2012).

Internationalization in the schools is the process of adding an international aspect to the goals of and activities conducted in the education system (Knight, 2006).<sup>19</sup> This includes: the movement of teaching staff and pupils between schools, which is common mainly in the higher education system; increasing the number of international schools that award an international matriculation certificate; studies in English; adding international learning matter to that taught in the schools, usually content dealing with human rights and environmental awareness; processes of assimilating technology as a tool for increasing internationalism by means of long-distance teaching; international cooperative and learning programs; and the teaching of foreign languages and cultures.

The process of internationalization is one of the most popular and discussed areas in the European discourse, but in Israel it is hardly acknowledged outside the colleges and universities. Israel’s exceptional political situation, the geographical distance from potential international partners, high costs, as well as a lack of awareness of the process’s contribution to shaping and educating students – all of these together have conspired to leave this area in the Israeli education system entirely undeveloped; nor has it been accorded any regard by policy makers, and not even by teachers and principals. Of no help either in convincing them to treat it seriously is the intensification of the internationalization process in Europe over the last decade in the wake of local processes, as

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<sup>19</sup> This as opposed to the term “globalization” that refers to the free movement of goods, people, technology and money across state borders.



most of the influence on the education system in Israel originates from the United States.

Promoting internationalization in the education system began in Europe with the Bologna Process (Bologna Declaration, 1999). Although the entire process is targeted at the higher education area, in practice it was swiftly joined also by upper secondary schools and primary schools around the world (Yemini and Ben-Artzi, 2013). There are several major reasons why the entire education system is joining the internationalization process:

A. The increasing trend towards internationalization in the universities and colleges affects the schools. This process aligns with the “systems theory,” according to which organizations aspire to be like other successful organizations and to imitate their strategies. The schools are thus trying to prepare their graduates for studies in the higher education system.

B. The pupils arriving in the education system today are “digital” pupils. They live in a global world and know it well, and a need has arisen in the schools to teach them in a manner that is consistent with their natural and familiar environment, and to respond to global and international phenomena by accelerating internationalization.

C. In an era characterized by growing competition among schools, principals are likely to implement school-level internationalization processes, such as language studies, pupil exchanges and international competitions, as a tool for achieving a distinction that grants the school added market value (Weenink, 2009).

From a broader perspective, internationalization includes the educational values of multiculturalism, tolerance of difference, and the development of desirable character traits among the pupils. However, it needs to be kept in mind that schools are rather conservative organizations, which find it difficult to formulate and implement changes (Dolby and Rahman, 2008).

Education systems all over the world, including in Israel, enjoy little autonomy compared to the higher education system, as their curriculum and many administrative matters are determined by the Ministry of Education or the local authorities. Since the internationalization processes do not begin at the individual school level, but require both a local and national supervisory system, the schools find themselves in a difficult position: on the one hand, they have to implement more and more global processes, usually mediated by technology and access to the internet; on the other hand, they are part of the education system and its supervisory apparatuses, which sometimes cling to conservative policy.

Technology, especially computer and information technology, can be a crucial tool in promoting internationalization processes in the school. Systems and tools such as Wikipedia, virtual worlds, remote study by means of video conference calls, blogs, social networks, school websites, etc., are changing modes of study and shattering outdated images of education and the school. Today's digital pupils are being exposed to worlds and far more distant places than pupils in the past. By means of virtual sites, connections can quickly be made between pupils in Israel and their overseas counterparts who share the same interest. The internet sites that pupils in Israel and abroad are exposed to provide an excellent foundation for communication that was not possible in the past.

Today there are several structural impediments preventing the implementation of internationalization processes in the schools: a) unfamiliarity with and misunderstanding of the field on the part of the supervisory elements in the Ministry of Education and the local authorities; b) a paucity of extracurricular activities that include the use of computers; c) inadequate language skills of pupils in the lower grades (mainly in English); d) limited access to the internet in the schools, primarily those in the geographic and social periphery; and e) lack of awareness on the part of school principals and the leading teachers of the importance of the field and of the variety of ways to implement and advance the internationalization process in education. Since the last of these is the main structural impediment to advancing the process, an

important first step is for school principals to develop and cultivate international activities, each in his or her school, such as: encouraging language study by increasing the number of teaching hours devoted to foreign languages; increasing access to the internet in the school, in particular access to international information; developing and implementing programs for exchanging delegations with schools abroad; adding global contents to the curriculum; conducting international initiatives; and enriching pupils with information about other countries in the world.

The first stage in implementing international processes in the Israeli education system seems to be increasing the awareness of these processes. Internationalization in the schools will be a central process in the coming decade, and the variety of possible activities in this field, as well as the possible government support and regulation in its implementation, should be examined.

Education systems for the masses became common in most countries at the start of the twentieth century. Their task was to institutionalize and preserve the standing of the nation, strengthen nationalism and entrench the self-definition in contradistinction to the other, the foreigner (Coulby, 2005). Patriotism, nationalism, and preference for the local over the global are cornerstones in the educational socialization process that takes place in schools (Resnik, 1999). On an individual school level, the internationalization process has been discussed mainly in the context of international schools (Cambridge and Thompson, 2004; Hayden and Thompson, 1995). At first most of the research in this field focused on schools for non-native pupils, such as the children of diplomats who were educated at international institutions and migrated from country to country (Hayden and Thompson, 1995). In time, the research in this field also examined schools that serve a local population and deal with global topics, or that are striving toward global and international teaching (Carber, 2009; Hayden, 2011). However, the involvement of schools in international activity has hardly been examined from the aspect of school principals, and the characterization of internationalization and the

manifestations of such involvement in local schools have not been widely documented.

In the internationalization arena schools are dealing with a variety of pressures, local and global, driving in opposite directions. It seems that implementing the process in the school, as well as the support of the school principals and their involvement in the process of internationalization, are supposed to be diverse and dependent on the individual school and the central policy. The internationalization process in regular schools (i.e., which are not international) has hardly been studied – not from the implementation aspect and not from the aspect of the school principals' motivation to become involved in the process (Yemini, 2002).

### *A. International Matriculation Certificate*

One of the prominent internationalization processes in educational systems around the world is the adoption of curricula aimed at granting an international matriculation certificate and its derivatives. The International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) is an educational organization whose goal is to develop and evaluate curricula for giving pupils the personal, emotional and social skills suited to life, study and work in the global world. The nonprofit organization is active in 3,479 schools in 144 countries, reaching over one million pupils. IBO runs three main programs according to age groups: 3 to 12, 12 to 16, and 16 to 19. At the conclusion of two years' study, the latter program awards a matriculation certificate that is recognized by most of the world's leading and most prestigious universities.

The organization was established in 1968 and is located in Geneva, Switzerland. In its early years, its activity focused on developing and supervising the curricula in international schools, which served a small community of diplomats' children. Today, about half of these children who are studying for an international matriculation certificate do so in public schools. The program operates in many countries and receives

support from the public system in those countries. According to the organization's website, in Israel there is only one school that allows regular studies towards an international matriculation certificate: the Anglican School in Jerusalem (a private institution).

The curricula for the organization's three age groups are designed to prepare the graduates for the global world, with a focus on precisely defining and monitoring the curricular and extracurricular activities at the school. The uniqueness of the program for receiving an international matriculation certificate lies in the combination of exceptional methodological and pedagogic components, such as the theory of knowledge<sup>20</sup> and performing multidisciplinary research projects in the course of the studies. The pupils study languages (mother tongue and other languages), the social and exact sciences, and they are required to choose additional fields of study, such as art.

Schools are entitled to submit a request for a certification process by the IBO, which includes adaptation, certification and monitoring of activity. The process entails paying annual membership fees to the organization of \$10,000. Schools that have been granted certification by the IBO incur additional expenses for learning infrastructure, teachers, study materials, etc.

In many European countries, including Britain and the Netherlands, the number of public schools offering study tracks recognized by the IBO is growing from year to year. Bunnell (2010) analyzed the spread of the process of granting an international matriculation certificate in Britain. He claims that the status of this certificate is gradually changing, from an exclusive certificate prevalent in special schools, to a prestigious certificate granted by a variety of schools throughout Britain. In Britain, the number is rising of organizations and institutions adopting parts of the international curriculum, and the local diplomas they grant their graduates are unique in being partially based on the global curriculum.

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<sup>20</sup> The theory of knowledge is aimed at developing among pupils the skills of critical thinking and scientific analysis.

There are areas in Britain where the international matriculation certificate is replacing the prestigious British matriculation certificate, known as the A-level examination. Many schools in the United States are also adopting studies towards international matriculation exams, as an alternative to the advanced placement tests, which award a theoretical matriculation certificate.

However, criticism has been directed at the IBO as well. One claim is that the organization's curriculum features a Western dominance relative to other cultures, and overly academic requirements that are unsuited to the level of all of the pupils. Another claim comes from the field of "hyper-capitalism": some argue that in the curricula of the education system, as in the market principles in the fields of mass consumption, there are competing brands, and thus the curricula of the IBO is also undergoing a branding process.

In recent years, there has been an unmistakable dissatisfaction with the achievements of the education system, both among the public at large and among policy makers at the Ministry of Education. At the same time, the Israeli education system has been in an accelerated process of economic, curricular and ideological decentralization for more than a decade. The Ministry of Education has actively participated in the public debate concerning it: it has appointed committees to examine the efficiency and quality of the education system and at the same time has planned and implemented new educational initiatives and structural changes, which also included the format of the matriculation exams. These changes have reverberated in the public debate and in the field of academic research as well. Several committees have submitted their recommendations, and also the social protests of the summer of 2011, in particular the "education encampment" on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv, raised the debate on the matriculation exams to a high place on the public agenda. This debate revolves around such questions as the required number of exams and their dispersal over the course of secondary school studies; contents and subjects that ought to be included in the matriculation exams; studies towards the exams and the threshold

requirements of compulsory studies in core subjects in all of Israel's educational streams, in particular the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) sector. Despite the changes that have already been made in the exams, including cancellation of the lottery of external exams, and despite the broadening of the study fields, there seems to be no discussion in Israel about possibly adopting exams towards an international matriculation certificate.

It is interesting to look at the same time at the government policy with regard to joining the Bologna Process and its policy with regard to the international matriculation certificate. On both these issues, the policy seems hesitant: there is no continuity to the decision making processes, nor are they accompanied by orderly examination relative to the situation in the world. Despite the considerable publicity awarded to international comparative tables of pupil achievement or rankings of the most prestigious universities, the impression is that neither the alternative of international matriculation nor the possibility of joining the Bologna Process has been adequately examined.

### ***B. Europeans Programs to Encourage Internationalization in the Education System***

The Comenius Programme<sup>21</sup> to encourage the development of a European consciousness is the most prominent one funded by the European Community. The program is aimed at a variety of interested parties, including teachers, pupils, schools, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In the framework of the program, funding is granted for the development of super-European curricular content and for exchanges of pupils and teachers. This is a twin program to Erasmus, which is aimed at the higher education system.

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<sup>21</sup> The program is named after John Amos Comenius, a Czech scholar of the seventeenth century who taught in several European countries and is considered the father of modern universal education.

### *C. Language Policy in Schools*

The term globalization reflects growing critical interest in the way countries are becoming more and more enmeshed in global systems and communication networks (Hayden, 2011). In this context, Beck and Sznaider's (2006) take on globalization – as a force whose influence on others is coercive and uncontrollable – as a good starting place for dealing with the issue of language policy in the schools, as language plays a central role in social integration in the local and global communities (Griva and Chouvarda, 2012). The acquisition of a foreign language is an important basic powerbase that is displayed in an ability to communicate, and thereby provides a considerable advantage to its speakers. With reference to knowledge of languages in the context of intercultural, international and global experiences, Weenink (2008) defined the ability to become integrated into global social arenas as “cosmopolitan capital.”

Language is a social-economic-cultural asset that plays a key role in social interaction, particularly in today's global world. Therefore, the acquisition of an additional language is today an inseparable part of the curricula in most Western countries. The value of the study of foreign languages is mainly informed by the importance attributed to the exposure of youth to foreign cultures, as a tool for advancing their socioeconomic achievement and cultural development as adults. The decision whether to acquire a foreign language and in what way derives from many considerations, including the role played by the specific language in the country's international relations, the question regarding the language's prestige and usefulness, and its role in social mobility and business opportunities.

Schools in Israel today have study programs in English as a second foreign language, and most schools also offer study of an additional foreign language. Underlying these programs is the understanding that language is a vital tool which serves as a stimulus for future advancement and integration in the social and economic market.



Until 1996, no official policy document was drawn up specifying the language policy in Israeli schools, although even then various languages were studied. According to a Ministry of Education director-general circular from 1996, the new language policy in Israel (“3+,” as it was called in the circular) supported multilingualism: it reflected the social reality and acknowledged the necessity for each population group to study the other’s language. Under this policy, each sector was required to study three languages. In the Jewish sector, Hebrew was set as the language of instruction, English study began in the fourth grade, and Arabic or French were taught from the seventh grade for three years. In the Arab Israeli sector, Arabic was set as the language of instruction, Hebrew study began in the third grade and English in the fourth. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education encouraged the study of “world languages” (mainly Spanish, Chinese and German), the conservation of community languages among immigrants (Russian and Amharic), and the conservation of Jewish heritage languages (Yiddish and Ladino). However, the circular was not implemented in its entirety in the education system (Shohamy and Spolsky, 2003).

The new policy encouraged the establishment of special schools to cultivate multilingualism, such as the Gertz Primary School in Tel Aviv, which promotes the development of multilingualism and multiculturalism by exposing its pupils to a wide variety of languages from the first grade. The curriculum at this school includes English studies from the first grade, Arabic from the third, Spanish from the fifth, and French as an option from the sixth.

The Ministry of Education, then, appears to be practicing an open policy that encourages multilingualism and the conservation of languages, in acknowledgment of the importance of exposure to multiculturalism as part of the global process and the creation of a cosmopolitan identity. Implementing and broadening this process to all of the schools in Israel ought to be examined.

#### *4. Summary and Conclusions*

Life in modern society is infinitely faster and more complex than what it was only a few decades ago. Today, the individual needs endless amounts of information, which is being generated around the world faster than the ability to comprehend it; uses advanced technology, which becomes outdated even before most users have understood its advantages; establishes and manages contacts with people who are distant geographically and culturally; and changes workplace, residence and social environment with relatively high frequency.

The education system reflects what is happening in society and is required to respond to changes in it. The effects of global processes on the education system are apparent at the institutional, regional and state levels, in both the schools and the higher education institutions. The response to globalization, or perhaps one of its manifestations, is the internationalization of the education system. International, global and intercultural aspects are gradually becoming more central to institutions around the world, and they are changing the face of all education systems, including those who teach and are taught there.

The twenty-first century is the cosmopolitan century. It is a period of changes, consolidation and harmonization on one hand, and of differentiation and specialization on the other hand. More than ever before, the individual in modern society is required to be not just a citizen of the state, but a citizen of the world as well. The forces driving towards internationalization are diverse and based on economic, political, social, and cultural considerations, and the forces opposed to it are also arguing on the basis of the same considerations. In this state of affairs, dealing with internationalization is a daily necessity, firmly institutionalized and structured within the education system.

However, the State of Israel lags far behind in the matter of academic and public debate over many important international processes. Despite Israel's requests to join the Bologna Process in 2007 and 2008, no professional discussion of the issue was held in the relevant forums of the

Council for Higher Education or the Committee for Planning and Budgeting, and the heads of many academic institutions are unfamiliar with the process, its advantages and drawbacks. Israel's energetic participation in the European research area and the strong institutional pressure on researchers to participate in it have not been accompanied by similar efforts to integrate into the European higher education sphere, even though these are two parallel areas and operate together in many of the countries around the world.

The debates over the essence of education in the twenty-first century and over the knowledge and skills required in this era are at the focus of public interest, as attested to by the fact that information and details on conferences dealing with these fields feature high on the lists of internet searches all over the world, including in Israel. Even though discussion of the required reform in the educational system draws considerable interest, the international aspect is characterized by rather meager and one-dimensional concerns focusing on pupil achievement in international tests and on the need to improve achievements in these tests in order to improve Israel's competitiveness. In effect, seen this way, education represents goods which determine the state's economic outputs.

The State of Israel's essence and definition as a Jewish state and its migration and education laws do not accord with the internationalization trends, and in many ways even work in opposition by placing greater emphasis on the local and ethnic at the expense of the global and international. Nonetheless, as a democratic, modern and competitive state, Israel is required to educate generations of youngsters with global skills that are greater than merely a command of languages and technology, but that also include a commitment to global values that encourage human rights, protection of the environment and recognition of the other. In the next few years, with the intensification of the internationalization process in education, existing policy and its consequences will have to be contended with, and in this context, policy and its implementation in each of the areas referred to in this policy paper should be examined.

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