

Dirasat
Arab Center for Law and Policy

**The Follow-Up Committee On
Arab Education**

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Overview and Policy Recommendations**

ISBN 978-965-91263-2-3



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Dirasat – The Arab Center for Law and Policy | *The Follow-Up Committee on Arab Education*

Nazareth, 2010

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Law and Policy, 2010.*

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*This book was published with the support
of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation*



Placing the Arab Teacher at the Center

The Palestinian-Arab community constitutes nearly 20% of the population in Israel. Arab students comprise 25% of the students in the education system, and Arab teachers-in-training make up more than 30% of the students in teachers' colleges in Israel. Despite the growing interest by academics and state institutions in evaluating teacher training in Israel, the subject of Arab teacher training remains almost entirely ignored.

From a critical perspective, it appears that the process of training Arab teachers – in Arab and Jewish teaching colleges, and in the universities – makes no attempt to endow the future Arab teacher with the necessary tools to address the complex reality of the cultural and national uniqueness experienced by half a million Arab students living in a society undergoing constant changes that are

often quite dramatic. As is the case in most other areas of life in Israel, in education as well as in teacher training, Arab researchers and education leaders are systematically excluded from the policy and decision-making processes.

This reality even further deteriorates the status of teachers in Arab society in Israel and deepens the alienation that both students and teachers experience in the Arab education system. The harsh results of this situation can be easily seen in the perpetuation of large, existing gaps, in all possible realms, between Jewish and Arab students, and in their sense of powerlessness to change the situation.

The Follow-Up Committee on Arab Education and DIRASAT, the Arab Center for Law and Policy, undertook to respond to these challenges through conducting this study on the central questions pertaining to the issue of teacher training, such as: what is an appropriate means of training the Arab teacher in Israel, and what is an ideal administrative model for Arab teacher training programs?

As the following research demonstrates, the challenges before the Arab teacher training system in Israel can be divided into three main categories:

substantive equality in the allocation of resources; recognition of the cultural and national uniqueness of Arab students and teachers as an indigenous minority in Israel and the need to address this uniqueness in the teacher training process itself; and, the need for true partnership in the decision-making processes such that Arab society will be equally included in making decisions and setting policies regarding the substance and administration of teacher training in Israel.

This landmark study, conducted by Dr. Ayman Agbaria, lecturer in education at the University of Haifa, was first presented to fellow Arab and Jewish academics and education professionals in a series of round-table discussions, and we wish to thank them for their for their valuable comments and feedback. This study also constitutes a key step in our efforts to insert a collective and critical voice on education policy into the national discourse, and to continue to address in a professional manner the unique character of Arab education in Israel.

Arab Teacher Training in Israel: Overview and Policy Recommendations

The concept of “teacher training” relates to three stages: pre-service training, induction training, and in-service training. For the most part, this paper explores issues that pertain to the first stage: pre-service training. Namely, the preliminary training that aims at preparing students to meet the professional requirements expected of them as novice teachers. The quality of this type of training is critical to the advancement of the socio-economic status of the Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel. Indeed, it is now commonly recognized that investment in teacher education is one of the most significant factors influencing the level of achievement in education systems. Given that various recent reports - based on results from international tests and matriculation exams - have indicated that the consistently lower performance of Arab pupils as compared to their

Jewish peers has dropped even further,¹ the issue of the quality of Arab teacher training colleges has been moved to the forefront of the public agenda of the Arab leadership and of civil and human rights organizations.

However, in spite of the data showing the dramatic decline in Arab students' performance in 2008, the Ministry of Education in Israel has made no indication that it will reconsider its policy in this field, particularly with regard to how Arab teacher training institutes should be governed, funded, and supervised. While many commissions were established in order to examine the state of the teacher training colleges in Israel over the past several years, all of these commissions took a universal approach to teacher training, while overlooking the fact that Arab teachers have a different language, national identity, and tradition than their Jewish counterparts. Not only have the various committees formed in recent years ignored

1. To illustrate, in 2008, only 31.94 percent of Arab pupils passed their matriculation exams. In comparison, 59.7 percent of Jewish students passed. This is as compared to a matriculation rate of roughly 50 percent of Arab students in years prior, with Jewish students passing at steady rates each year.

the cultural needs of the Arab minority in Israel, but they also have marginalized the Arab educational and public leadership. In fact, participation by the Arab leadership in policy and decision making in the field of teacher training is nominal, to say the least. In what follows, this paper seeks to draw policymakers' attention to three core needs that require their intervention:

1. The need for substantive equality, and even affirmative action, in the allocation of resources in order to bridge the vast disparities between the Arab and Jewish teacher training colleges (which include on the Arab side, for example, inferior infrastructure, smaller budgets, and fewer human resources);
2. The need for genuine recognition of the historic-cultural narrative of the Arab minority in Israel;
3. The need for significant inclusion of Arab educational and public leaders and professionals in the policy and decision making cycles in the Ministry of Education and in the public governing bodies

responsible for the administration of the teacher training institutes.

Overview

The study of Arab teacher training bears great significance for policymakers because of the massive number of Arab students studying in teacher training colleges. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) from 2007\08 indicate that while Arabs comprise almost 20% of Israeli society, they comprise more than 31.2% of the students in teacher training colleges. It is worth noting that the percentage of Arab students in Israeli universities increased from 6% in 1999\00 to 9.05% in 2007\08, while their attendance in the academic colleges rose from 2.5% to 6% in the same years. However, the percentage of Arab students in teacher training colleges more than doubled from 15% in 1999\00 to 31.2% in 2007\08.

Breaking down the data further, according to CBS data from 2007\08, there are only four (4) Arab teacher training colleges, often referred to as the colleges in Arab education, while there are 56 Jewish colleges, often referred to as the colleges in Hebrew

education. Data from the same source also reveal that the number of students in the Jewish teacher training colleges (in public, public-religious, and orthodox alike) is 33,893, among which 3,327 are Arab students; whereas, there are 2,827 students in the Arab education colleges. The total number of Arab students in Arab and Jewish teacher training colleges combined is 6,154. In short, only 46% of the Arab students are enrolled in the Arab colleges, while 54% of them are enrolled in the Jewish colleges, mainly in special tracks (programs) designed to include only Arab students. It should be noted that many Arab tracks within the Jewish colleges enjoy some extent of administrative autonomy within these colleges.²

The CBS data from the years 1997/8 through 2007/8, shown in Table 1, demonstrate that the overall number of Arab students, in both the Arab and

2. For example, the Druze Teacher Program at the Gordon College of Education, Haifa; the Bedouin Teacher Program at the Kaye College of Education, Negev; the Bedouin Teacher Program at the Achva Academic College of Education, Negev; the Arab Teachers Program in Special Education at the David Yellin College of Education, Jerusalem; the Bedouin Teacher Program at the Oranim Academic College, northern Israel; and the Bedouin Teacher Program at the Ohalo Academic College of Education and Sports, occupied Golan Heights.

Jewish teaching colleges, rose from 3,619 to 6,154 (an increase of 70%). However, the number of Arab students in the Arab colleges increased, during the same period, from 2,119 to 2,827 (an increase of only 33.4%). Indeed, it is the number of Arab students in the Hebrew colleges that has registered a dramatic increase: from 1,500 in 1997/8 to 3,327 in 2007/8 (an increase of 121.8%). Remarkably, the number of Jewish students in the Hebrew public teacher training colleges fell by 15.9% during that same period.

Table 1: Arab and Jewish Students in Teacher Training Colleges
1997/08 - 2007/08

	Students in Ultra-Orthodox Education	Students in State-religious Education	Students (Arabs and Jews) in State Education	Jewish Students in State Education	Jewish Students in Hebrew Education (Grand Total)	Arab Students in Hebrew Education (6)	Arab Students in Arab Education	Arab Students in Arab and Hebrew Education (Grand Total)
97-98	4,182	5,725	13,950	12,450	22,357	1,500 (1)	2,119	3,619
98-99	5,623	5,890	14,858	12,958	24,471	1,900 (1)	2,110	4,010
99-00	6,347	6,743	15,352	12,952	26,042	2,400 (1)	2,621	4,821
00-01	7,099	6,760	15,289	12,401	26,260	2,888 (2)	2,676	5,564
01-02	8,711	6,819	15,231	11,414	27,044	3,717 (2)	3,061	6,778
02-03	9,012	7,008	15,352	11,552	27,572	3,800 (3)	3,581	7,381
03-04	9,317	6,921	14,875	10,986	27,251	3,889 (4)	3,633	7,522
04-05	6,347	6,648	14,348	10,588	27,384	3,760	4,047	7,807
05-06	11,041	6,693	13,567	9,855	27,619	3,682	3,450	7,132
06-07	10,958	6,572	13,026	---	---	--- (5)	3,664	---
07-08	13,392	6,714	13,787	10,460	30,566	3,327	2,827	6,154

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1. 400 of these students were enrolled in special classes for Arab students.
 2. 700 of these students were enrolled in special classes for Arab students.
 3. 970 of these students were enrolled in special classes for Arab students.
 4. Beginning in the year 2003/04, the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) stopped reporting the number of Arab students enrolled in the special classes.
 5. The number of Arab students in Hebrew Education in 2006\07 is missing data in the CBS reports.
 6. Almost all of these students are enrolled in Hebrew state colleges.

Source: the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the Statistical Abstracts of Israel from 1998-No. 49 to 2008-No.59

Toward a New Arab Teacher Training Policy

When considering Arab teacher training in Israel, policymakers encounter two fundamental questions: Who should train Arab teachers? And, how should their training be conducted? In addressing the first question, policymakers should consider the participatory and effective structures of governance and administration that would ensure that Arab society's educational and public

leadership, Arab civil society organizations, and representational bodies of the Arab minority in Israel (such as the National Committee for Arab Mayors and the Supreme Follow-Up Committee for Palestinian Arabs in Israel) are genuinely involved in the policy and decision making processes with regard to curricular, budgetary, and administrative matters.

In addressing the second question, policymakers should consider what multicultural strategies would ensure that the language, history, tradition, and narrative of the Arab minority are significantly incorporated and respectfully practiced in the curricula and services provided by teacher training colleges, especially in the Arab teacher training colleges.

That said, this paper does not advocate for considering Arab teacher training separately from the common problems and shared challenges facing teacher training in Israel in general. On the contrary, for instance, the transfer of the all teacher training colleges from being supervised and funded by the Ministry of Education to the auspices of the Higher

Education Council (HEC) is a common interest shared by all colleges, Arab and Jewish alike. The current situation, in which Arab teacher training institutes are supervised directly by the Ministry of Education, indeed preserves the dependency on, and subordination to, the professional and ideological agenda produced and disseminated through the Ministry. All in all, this agenda primarily focuses on the development of the Jewish teacher in the framework of Hebrew education. The transfer to the HEC's funding and supervision would provide an opportunity to design a more independent agenda for the development of the Arab teacher in Arab colleges and to receive state funding for these colleges in a more egalitarian and transparent manner. Most importantly, this transfer would bind the Arab colleges to clearer and higher standards in terms of curricula and faculty.

This paper advocates for regulating and implementing a distinctive Arab teacher training policy that would provide solutions for the different cultural, linguistic, and social needs of the Arab minority in Israel. Reforming the current policy is needed in three central areas: equality, participation,

and recognition of Arab national and cultural uniqueness. Regarding the first area, equality, a policy of affirmative action is required to bridge the gap between Arab and Jewish teacher colleges with regard to budgets, infrastructures, and the working conditions at the classroom level (e.g., the number of students per class, number of students per training supervisor, and number of instructors in tenure positions). With regard to participation, policymakers should invest more of their efforts in increasing the involvement of Arab society in designing policy and decision-making processes within the Ministry of Education and the Higher Education Council on issues affecting the training of Arab teachers.

The issues related to developing a policy in accordance with the distinctiveness of the Palestinian Arab cultural and national identity are twofold. The first issue deals with the kind of pedagogical and institutional autonomy required to exercise effective influence on how Arab teachers are trained. While this issue is tightly intertwined with the demands raised by the Arab public leadership for collective rights - including cultural and educational

autonomy within the state of Israel - we admit that the structures and strategies that should be in place in order to administer a culturally autonomous Arab teacher training program that is part and parcel to a self-administered Arab education system are still unclear, and indeed not yet fully envisioned.. Therefore and for now, the changes and regulations needed to reform Arab teacher training, within the framework of a self-administered, democratic, and state-funded Arab education system in Israel, still need further public discussion and academic research. The second issue deals with the kind of pedagogical and institutional structures and strategies required to differentiate the Arab colleges from the Jewish colleges, and to increase the pedagogical and ideological variations among the Arab colleges themselves. We recommend that policymakers at the Ministry and college levels consider ways to advance pedagogical pluralism among the teacher training colleges. More specific recommendations are provided below.

At the Ministry of Education Level:

- To draft and implement a distinctive policy for Arab teacher training in Israel that is more

oriented to the cultural and social needs of the Arab minority thereof. Such a policy would clarify the objectives of the training of Arab teachers in Israel, outline the particular knowledge, skills, and values that Arab teachers are expected to acquire through their training, and enable them to function as leading and involved professionals in their communities. Furthermore, a policy more sensitive to the collective and cultural rights of the Arab minority in Israel means that such a policy would incorporate suggested ways to facilitate genuine involvement of the Arab leadership and civil society organizations in the policy- and decision- making cycles in teacher training, including in regulatory, funding, and curricular issues. As a first step, we recommend that the Ministry of Education and the Arab civil society organizations, jointly and separately, initiate a process of drafting position papers on this issue.

- To adopt a more effective policy in dealing with the increasing rates of unemployment

amongst recent graduates of teacher training institutes. To this end, policymakers should reconsider the scale of the budget allocations to the Arab teacher colleges and to the Arab special tracks in Jewish teacher colleges, as well as the criteria upon which these allocations are determined, in order to adjust the number of Arab students to accurately reflect the current job market for teachers. These allocations are generally calculated based on the number of enrolled students that the Ministry of Education approves annually to each college (the “quota”); however, the Ministry distributes the budget unequally and disproportionately between the Arab and Hebrew colleges in disregard for of the actual demand for Jewish, and especially Arab, teachers in the workforce. We therefore recommend that policy- and decision-makers incorporate a forecast of the Arab teaching workforce demand and the number of currently unemployed teachers joining the job search pool into a set of new criteria for distributing the quotas and budgets among the various colleges.

What is more, because the Ministry does not differentiate between Jewish and Arab students in assigning quotas to the Jewish Colleges, when Jewish enrollment declines in these colleges they are eager to accept Arab students in order to reach the quota and maintain the same level of Ministry funding. Thus, policymakers should consider reducing the approved number of Arab students to be enrolled in the Jewish colleges, including the Arab tracks within these colleges.

Meanwhile, the Arab colleges tend to operate on a surplus acceptance policy, allowing 10-30 percent more students than the budget allocation, thereby making a profit off of their tuition, yet packing the classrooms without increasing the number of staff or their salaries. To this end, the Ministry of Education should tighten its supervision over the colleges to prevent over-admission of Arab students, and should alter the procedures and criteria for approving such surplus admissions to be more restrictive and transparent.

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- To strengthen the status and use of the Arabic language at the administrative level in the Ministry of Education by, among other things, publishing materials in Arabic, corresponding and communicating with the Arab colleges in Arabic, and hiring more Arab employees to the teacher training division of the Ministry of Education, and to the Institute for Curriculum Planning and Teacher Training (the MOFET Institute).
 - To establish a permanent forum in which representatives would convene regularly from Arab colleges, special Arab tracks at Jewish colleges, the Ministry of Education, the Higher Education Council, and Arab civil society organizations. The purpose of this forum would be to create an ongoing dialogue on the major issues and challenges faced by all the participants in the realm of Arab teacher training.

At the Arab Teacher Training Colleges Level:

- To strengthen the professional leadership of

the Arab colleges, and to empower the senior staff in the Arab colleges and tracks, in order to enhance the quality of the management, student services, and instruction provided. In this context, it is important to increase the coordination and cooperation among Arab colleges and tracks by creating, among other things, joint learning communities and professional forums (e.g., forums and committees for the academic coordinators, heads of departments, counselors, deans, heads of curriculum committees, etc.).

- To encourage the writing and publishing in Arabic of policies, newsletters, research, official letters, curricula, textbooks, syllabi and instructional guides. In this context, we recommend that Arab colleges and tracks adopt a policy according to which students, except those in the Hebrew and English departments, are required to submit their class work and seminar papers in Arabic only.
- To strengthen women and gender studies

within the curricula. The fact that the vast majority of the Arab students in the teacher training institutes are young women requires more gender-oriented practices and pedagogies in the curricula, as well as in student services.

- To improve the academic skills, especially academic writing and ethics, of Arab teaching students. Given that Arab high schools do not equip their graduates with the social and academic skills needed to perform successfully in higher education, Arab colleges and special tracks should initiate introductory and orientation programs and workshops before students start their studies.
- To develop new programs and courses that aim at building a stable, open, and critical civil-national identity. Given that there are no specializations or departments in the Arab colleges, or tracks dedicated to civic or social education, it is imperative to develop new programs and courses that will introduce Arab students to the cultural and historical

heritage of the Palestinian people and contribute to their understanding of their status as citizens of Israel. Most importantly, we recommend that Arab colleges and tracks develop new courses and programs that would provide prospective teachers with the needed capabilities and pedagogies to encounter, at the school and community level, the social problems and challenges facing Arab society in Israel: poverty, violence, racism, unemployment, privatization, globalization, gender inequalities, and the like.

- To cultivate diversity among Arab colleges and tracks by encouraging them to develop different pedagogical emphases, distinctive specializations and programs, and various training models in the field. In this context, it is imperative not only that Arab colleges be distinguished from the colleges in Hebrew education, but also that Arab colleges and tracks be differentiated based on characteristics such as their quality of instruction, the programs provided, the quality of student life, ideological orientation, and so on.

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- To strengthen the relationship between the Arab colleges and the Arab workforce in education through providing professional development programs that would meet the needs of the Arab teachers in service. Arab colleges and tracks should establish special centers for continuing education and professional development for Arab teachers.
 - To initiate more ongoing projects between teacher training colleges and Arab civil society organizations. We also recommend that these colleges increase their involvement in community work and development, especially in the Arab towns and villages in the vicinity of the teacher training colleges. In this regard, it is critical that these colleges initiate more cooperative projects with the education and welfare departments of the Arab local authorities and the youth and community centers.
 - To raise the bar on acceptance into the teacher training institutes. Specifically, we

recommend that the admissions requirements be raised with regard to the minimum number of units, and the minimum score on the matriculation exam in Arabic, needed to qualify for admission to the Arab colleges.

- To recruit quality and leading academics and professionals for tenure positions in the teacher training positions. In particular, it is important to address the lack of lecturers and training supervisors with PhDs in educational studies who specialize in teacher training. We recommend that the Institute for Curriculum Planning and Teacher Training (MOFET Institute) provide a comprehensive training program for Arab lecturers in the different colleges that are interested in specializing in teacher training mentoring, supervision and coaching at the school level. It is critical to conduct this course in Arabic and in cooperation with leading Arab academics.
- To foster extracurricular and independent student activities for Arab students in the various Arab training colleges, including the

establishment of Arab student committees, as in the universities in Israel.

At the Jewish Teacher Training Colleges Level:

- To unify, or even to close, some of the special tracks and programs for Arab students at some of the Jewish teacher training colleges in Israel. For instance, opening four special tracks for Arab Bedouin teachers within four different Jewish colleges appears unjustified and ineffective. In light of the worrisome data on the deterioration of the education system in Arab-Bedouin communities, policymakers should consider establishing another Arab teacher training college in the Negev area, instead of these special tracks. The opening of another college in this area, where the vast majority of the Arab Bedouin communities are located, would allow a special pedagogical focus on the problems facing the Arab-Bedouin schools and communities.
- To advance and encourage more multicultural practices and pedagogies in the Jewish

teacher training colleges. For example, we recommend that the Jewish teacher training colleges include in their curricula courses that focus on the Arab minority in Israel, its culture, history, and socio-political status. Moreover, Jewish teacher training colleges should hire more Arab academics and professionals in tenure positions, give Arabic language a more prominent presence in the public spaces of the college, and allow students to form Arab student organizations and committees, as is the case in the universities.

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