

**Changes in the Social and Professional Status of  
Israeli Teachers as Reflected in Knesset Committees  
and Reforms between  
1963 and 2008**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to study the changes in the status of the Israeli teacher as reflected in the Knesset committees and in the educational reforms between the years 1963 till 2008.

The social status of the teacher relates to the image of the teaching professional. Some see it as a semi-professional occupation. The essence of teaching directly affects the professional and social teacher status. Nevertheless, the study points on additional factors including economical, social, academical and political components that shape the teacher status. This issue has appeared during the discussions of the seven state educational committees and their conclusions: Duskin (1962), Rimlet (1968), Ezyuni (1978), Dan (1981), Miriam Ben Peretz (2000), Dovrat (2003), Ariav (2005), and the reforms in the educational system: Oz Letmura (1997), Ofek Hadash (2008).

The research questions:

- To what extent was the status of teachers a matter of public and political discourse: What were the contexts in political and social issues that led to the above discussion?
- What prompted the initiators of the public committees to appoint committees, and what were the social and public pressures that affected their decisions?
- How professional do the committees view the teaching profession?
- What happened to the public committees that discussed the issue above?
- Were the hopes surrounding the committees brought into action?

- What was the attitude of the teachers' union on the issue of the teacher's status in the long run? How were these issues regarded? (Oz-Latmura and Ofek-Hadash).

This research is based in the “qualitative” paradigm and was conducted as a historic research on education, the purpose to understand the influence of past committee reforms and their part in shaping the teacher status, and the perception of teaching as a profession; their success, failure, and motives behind them. In conclusion, based on research results, a future model is suggested to improve the status of teachers in Israel. The research questions were checked by analyzing first-hand sources and interviews with those who were the policy makers.

The analysis began with a full and thorough review of the Education Committee of the Knesset collected from the archives of the Knesset, books, protocols and exchanges of letters of Histadrut Hamorim. In addition, interviews were conducted with key personnel in the field of education and their statements were recorded and transcribed.

Out of all the extensive information that was collected, ten themes were found and these are: the level of wages, working conditions, feminization, compensation, training teachers, autonomy of the teacher, parent involvement, the establishment of an ethics code, conflicts between teachers' unions, and politics in education that rose in the public political context regarding the status of the teacher, affecting and shaping the teacher's status in Israel between 1963-2008.

The results showed that the prestige of a profession relates to an economic aspect and high wages, which is one of the common aspirations of an individual. Teachers' unions persisted in trying to create a professional situation with high wages and the possibility of a challenge in order to attract quality personnel for teaching including men, arguing

that improving wages will prevent the departure of talented teachers who find themselves in financial distress due to earnings that are insufficient for their needs. The goal was that a "main provider" will find conditions to support their family from one job.

Teachers' unions felt discriminated against in economic ways, and asked to equalize their salaries to academics salaries and engineer salaries. As a result of strikes and struggles in the seventies, the teacher's salaries were matched to the engineer's salary, but this decision was eroded, which led to more strikes and other struggles in 1979 that led to the establishment of the Etzioni Committee that examined the status of teachers and the teaching profession.

Following the reform wage agreements signed in "Ofek-Hadash" and "Oz-Latmura" new salary tables and new promotion levels were set, as well as a change in the structure of a teacher's work week.

In the teaching profession there began a process of change in academic studies that affected the teachers and their learning institutions. Admission requirements and minimal requirements increased. Today, in the wake of academic studies and the "Ofek-Hadash" reform, teachers are not received into the working sphere without a teaching certificate and a Bachelor's Degree in Education B.Ed or BA.

The study also points to the influence of social factors in the autonomy of the teacher and the importance of establishing a code of ethics in order to improve the status of teachers and the teaching profession.

While implementation of the conclusions of the committees and the reforms has been deployed for years, it seems that some of the recommendations have evaporated and some recommendations and their implementation were stretched over the years. This

study offers the veto theory as an optional explanation for the delay of the application of conclusions and recommendations brought by the policy makers and education committees.