



## A Snapshot of the Arab Education System in Israel

### Background

Arab citizens of Israel comprise approximately 20% of the population in Israel, and 25% of the country's school students. Throughout their schooling, from elementary to high school, Arab and Jewish students primarily attend separate schools. The education system in Israel is a centralized system administered through the Ministry of Education. Among the main responsibilities of the Ministry of Education are the development of curricula, the supervision of teachers, and the construction of school buildings. Local municipalities are primarily responsible for the maintenance of school buildings and their equipment. For the academic year 2000-2001, the government invested a total of NIS 534 per student on average for Palestinians, compared with NIS 1,779 per Jewish student.<sup>1</sup>

### While Thousands of Classrooms are Needed, the State Builds Only Dozens Each Year

#### The Facts:

- The accumulated shortage of classrooms in the Arab education system is estimated at 5,000:
  - 2,000 classrooms are needed in schools (the Ministry of Education recognizes only 1,650);
  - 2,000 classrooms are needed for kindergartens; and
  - 900 classrooms are needed in the unrecognized villages in the Naqab (Negev).
- Rented classrooms: hundreds of millions of shekels (NIS) are spent each year on renting classrooms. Although the cost of each hired classroom is NIS 30,000 per year, the Ministry of Education allocates only NIS 8,600 per classroom per year. As a result, every hired classroom creates a deficit of over NIS 20,000 in the education budget of each Arab local authority (many of which are on the verge of financial collapse).
- In 2005, the Ministry of Education and the state lottery built only 180 classrooms in Arab towns and villages.
- Since 2000, fewer than 200 classrooms on average were built per year in the Arab education system. This pace of construction even fails to meet the natural rate of population growth.
- According to the Ministry of Education, 40% of its building budget will be allocated to Arab municipalities in 2006. However, the Ministry neglected to disclose that this budget supports the building of merely a few dozen classrooms, thereby once more disregarding the needs of the Arab education system.
- A significant number of Arab schools are operating under sub-standard physical conditions, including safety and health-related hazards, which cause accidents and pose a real threat to pupils' lives. In our estimation, there are currently around 2,000 hired classrooms and regular classrooms which are not suitable for learning in the Arab education system.

<sup>1</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), *New Survey – Investment in Education 2000/1*, Press Release 3 August 2004 (Hebrew).

### Our Demands:

- A detailed and budgeted governmental plan, with a precise time schedule, which aims at addressing the deficit in the Arab education system in terms of classroom construction, for the building of 5,000 classrooms.
- The adoption of a policy of prioritization in the budget for construction based on needs.
- The immediate allocation of NIS 60 million to eradicate safety and health hazards in Arab schools.
- In the absence of adequate work on classroom construction, the Ministry of Education must finance the entire cost of hiring classrooms (NIS 30,000 per year per classroom).

### **Kindergartens are Becoming Profitable Private Businesses Lacking Minimal Supervision**

#### The Facts:

- The 2005 education budget allocates resources for the building of no more than five kindergartens in Arab municipalities.
- The Northern District of the Ministry of Education allocated less than 7% of professional teaching hours (200 out of 3,000) and less than 28% of instruction days (130 out of 470) to the Arab education system for the school year 2005-2006. More than half of the pupils in this district are Arab.
- 90% of the kindergartens in Arab municipalities are located in hired classrooms.
- While the government does not construct new kindergartens in the Arab education system, the Ministry of Education is moving towards privatization and facilitating the process of granting permits to private organizations wishing to open kindergartens. The chief concern of these organizations is profitability. The results are immediately apparent: in a survey undertaken in 47 Arab towns and villages, it was found that over 65% of pre-schools (349 out of 535) in these communities were administered by private owners, with almost no supervision from the government over the physical conditions of the building, the qualifications of the staff, etc.
- According to the Ministry of Education's own criteria, a supervisor should be allocated for every 80-100 kindergartens. In the Arab education system, however, only 6.5 Arab supervisors are funded, each of whom is responsible for 300 kindergartens. According to the Ministry's own criteria, there should be approximately 15 supervisors for Arab kindergartens. There is also a huge deficit in training days (days on which a supervisor from the Ministry of Education comes to a kindergarten to meet and hold training sessions with kindergarten teachers) for kindergartens in the Arab education system, and only one day of training per week is allocated for every 25 kindergartens.

#### Our Demands:

- The establishment and administration of kindergartens must remain the responsibility of the state (the Ministry of Education) and the local government (local authorities).
- A detailed and budgeted governmental plan, with a precise time schedule, for building kindergartens and pre-kindergartens, must be prepared.
- The policy of the Ministry of Education regarding the privatization of kindergartens must be brought to an end immediately.
- The allocation of appropriate teaching hours for supervision and instruction of preschool teachers, professional hours and instruction days in the Arab education should take place.

- The full array of psychological and educational counseling to preschool pupils must be developed and appropriate budgets for these purposes allocated.
- The Compulsory Education Law, as applied to children aged 3 and 4, must be implemented to cover all towns and villages classified as socio-economic clusters 3 and 4 (as defined by the Central Bureau of Statistics), in accordance with recommendations of the Dovrat Report.

### **The Dovrat Plan: The Current Situation of Infrastructure and the Financing of Free School Meals**

#### The Facts:

- The first stage of the implementation of the Dovrat Plan will include only nine out of 36 Arab local authorities.
- The majority of the schools in these local authorities were constructed three or four decades ago and the physical infrastructure of their buildings is consequently poor.
- According to the latest government report on poverty rates, 50% of the Arab population and 60% of Arab children in Israel live below the "poverty line." Arab local authorities are also on the verge of financial collapse and are therefore unable to finance the provision of free hot meals for pupils, under the "Feeding Enterprise."

#### Our Demands:

- The renovation of the infrastructure of schools in the Arab education system and the making of the necessary arrangements for the implementation of the Dovrat Plan in this system (including the building of classrooms, bathrooms, and work spaces for teachers).
- The Ministry of Education should come to an agreement with teachers' organizations regarding the implementation of the first stage of the Dovrat Plan, in order to ensure respect for teachers' rights.
- The government and the Ministry of Education should set aside the financial resources for the "Feeding Enterprise" in areas in which parents and the local authorities cannot afford to do so.

### **Security, Five-Year Plan, Special Education, and Science and Technology**

#### The Facts:

- For many years, the government, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Security have claimed that there is no need to maintain security guards in Arab schools, in spite of increasing levels of violence and other negative phenomena which cause harm to both pupils and teachers. This year, following the terror attack committed by an Israeli Jewish extremist in Shafa'amr, the government did not change its position.
- The current Five-Year Plan for the Arab education system is about to come to an end.
- Schools in the Arab education system lack curricula, laboratories and computers for the teaching of science and technology.
- In the Arab education system, there is a lack of funding for "integration hours" (teaching hours for pupils with special needs who are being educated in the regular education system), for paramedical professionals, for classes for pupils with learning disabilities, and other necessary educational frameworks.

Our Demands:

- A governmental decision to allocate budget allowances for maintaining security guards in all Arab schools and educational institutions.
- An assurance that the Five-Year Plan budget will be continued in the Arab education system, and that it will be funded from the Ministry of Education's regular budget.
- A serious, detailed and budgeted plan for the development of instruction in science and technology, to include the development of curricula, the preparation of laboratories, and the equipping of classrooms with computers.
- The appropriate allocation of "integration hours" on a needs-basis, and the maintaining of standards for promoting classes and other necessary educational frameworks for special education.
- A training plan for paramedical professionals and a professional career development plan, to begin in the 2005 academic year.