EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN ISRAEL – GROUPING AND TRACKING

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The grouping method was initiated in the United States in 1920 after World War I and the idea of separating the class pupils to several groupings has spread across the United States upon the implementation of intelligence tests. The grouping is determined according to the intelligence test: division of the children in a class into three levels: A, B and C. A low grouping brings about a negative effect upon the self-image of a pupil – a grouping by one method or another, can bring about an adverse effect upon the self-image of pupils, even by the mere fact of belonging to a low grouping.

The contribution of the grouping method – the method allows for awarding equal opportunities to pupils by creating homogenous classes of weak pupils, which allows for giving personal treatment to each pupil, as here two significant problems in classes are being resolved, which are: the number of pupils in a class, whereas in the grouping method, there would be smaller groups of pupils who receive a more personal and special treatment, as well as the problem of heterogeneity existing in a regular class.

Principally, the grouping method was supposed to bring about an inclusion of pupils in the school and reduce and fight instances of exclusion which basically signifies the absence of equality that brings about a low self-image in pupils. The contribution of the grouping method to achieving excellence by separation cannot be ignored, whereas separation supports the value of excelling and even can bring it about. Parallel to excelling, the term of equality that many strive at, has been severely damaged and school principals face the difficult dilemma of excelling versus equality.

The value of excelling is an elevated and important one, indeed its price is high and basically it is harmful to the principle of equality and especially in low groupings , which to my estimation is not appropriate and therefore there is a need to search for methods of achieving excellence without adversely affecting the self-image in weak groupings.

Keywords: tracking, grouping, tracking policy, nurturing policy, academization, Administrative Progressive, vocational policy.

SISTEMUL EDUCAȚIONAL DIN ISRAEL – METODA DE GRUP ŞI MONITORIZARE
Metoda de grup a fost iniţiată în Statele Unite, în 1920, după primul război mondial şi ideea de separare a elevilor din clasă în mai multe grupuri s-a răspândit în Statele Unite, la aplicarea testelor de inteligenţă. Gruparea este determinată în funcţie de testul de inteligenţă: diviziunea dintre copii într-o clasă în trei niveluri: A, B şi C. Un grup mic poate avea un efect negativ asupra imaginii de sine a unui elev – în dependenţă de o metodă sau alta, poate aduce un efect negativ asupra imaginii de sine a elevilor, chiar şi prin simplul fapt de apartenenţă la un grup mic**.**

Metoda de grup permite acordarea de şanse egale elevilor prin crearea de clase omogene de elevi slabi, ceea ce permite acordarea unui tratament personal fiecărui elev, ducând la soluţionarea a două probleme semnificative în clase: numărul de elevi într-o clasă, care primesc un tratament mai personal şi special, precum şi problema eterogenităţii existente într-o clasă obişnuită.

În principal, metoda de grup a fost orientată spre incluziunea elevilor în şcoală şi spre reducea şi combaterea cazurilor de excludere, care semnifică de fapt lipsa de egalitate, formând la elevi o imagine de sine scăzută.

Contribuţia metodei de grup la atingerea excelenţei prin separare nu poate fi ignorată, în timp ce separarea sprijină valoarea excelenţei şi chiar poate duce la aceasta. În paralel cu excelenţa, termenul de egalitate a fost grav afectat de unele persoane şi directorii de şcoală se confruntă cu dilema dificilă – excelenţa *versus* egalitatea.

Cuvinte-cheie: observare, grupare, politică de observare, politică de educaţie, academizare, administrare progresivă, politică vocaţională.

Equality of opportunities in the society

In order to reach an equality of opportunities in a heterogeneous society we are obligated to social leadership that would bring about an equality of rights. Are the structuration of goals and subjective motivation enough for the construction of social leadership? And what are the objective limitations for social leadership?

Many people in American politics have indicated and considered this fact in the achievements of various populations. With all the attendant differences, observations support the effect of heterogeneity of the population upon achievements. One of the prominent people stressing this fact was Ellwood Cubberely, one of the activists of the Administrative Progressive Movement, who claimed that schools should "quit the democratic-to-extremity idea according to which all people are equal and that our society is one without statuses".

Cubberley professed the adjustment of schools to the non-equalitarian social structure which has come into being in large cities [1].

Charles Elliot, president of the Harvard University, formulated the aims of Administrative Progressivism in a clearer manner, he stated in 1908: "it is time to face the facts. Our society is divided into layers and will continue to be divided into layers which borders are being merged and are easily crossable by individuals, however they still have different characteristics and different educational needs" [11].

In each cultural society there are four layers that are vital for the society, and as much can be seen, they are eternal: thin top layer comprised of the managing, leading, governing status – the intellectuals who find the discoveries, the inventors, organizers, managers and their senior assistants; then, the skilled workers, which number rises upon the application of technology to the production process; third there are the traders, the layers that deals in purchasing, selling and distribution; and finally, the basic and thick layer that deals in housework, agriculture, mining, quarrying and wood works. The schools are to be reorganized in order to serve each layer, so that each one gets the studying suitable to it. In summary, this opinion states that so long as there is heterogeneity in the population, it would continue to directly affect the achievements of the population [16].

Equality of opportunities in education and source of conflict in the United States

The method of grouping and tracking has begun in the United States in 1920 following the Progressive Administrative belief. The idea of separation of class pupils into several groups has spread throughout the United States with the spreading of the use of intelligence tests that is after World War I, and according to the intelligence test in Detroit. For example given to children of the 1st grade, in September 1920, the children have been divided into three groups:

a. Top 20% - received an extended program.
b. Middle 60% - received a regular program.
c. Bottom 20% - received a diluted program.

This progressive reform has operated in two strata. The first one, according to John Dewy, focused on the raising of the status of a school pupil in the world around him, from which benefited members of the veteran white status. And in the second stratum the progressive reform focused on leading towards systematic separation between pupils intended to become leaders, and those intended to man up the production lines in large factories [19].

The grouping and tracking separated between the veteran white and Anglo-Sax, and between immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The outcome has bread a conflict which gave birth to objectors to the reform headed by Professional Union heads of Chicago who severely attacked the tests: "has there been revealed a new law of nature according to which every person is connected to a certain status in the society, and there is no point fighting it?" [10].

Equality of opportunities in school in Israel

In same spirit, a similar approach has evolved in the educational system in the basis of which is an educational perception that "the child is in the center" has bred separate study courses, inferior in level. The educational practice of progressivism bestowed the American educational system with the selection tests, the tracking. The administrations of education asked to employ the tests in order to divide pupils according to grouping ability. The tests also served to locate gifted pupils or pupils with difficulties. And thus, the grouping and tracking separated the veteran white and Anglo-Sax and between immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe in the 60's. In the time period when the term "melting pot" has been in use, the grouping system has been introduced in Israel. However, in same time period, there has been strong political organization in operation in Israel who upheld "social equality" [2].

In the early 60's the grouping methods have been implemented in Israel. Most of the new immigrants have been from Arab countries considered as "outside-civilization" in the world. In 1950, Ben-Gurion said, "a big part of the immigrants arrive without knowing the alphabet, without a trace of Jewish or human education, and as a result the willingness that the veterans revealed regarding the fact that their children sit beside the children of the new immigrants in the class was minor" [5].

In light of this, the failure of the educational system in the immigrants' communities has been prominent. And this worried people of the ruling political party as to the political ramifications of the educational system. The question was, "how the level of Sephardic Jews could be raised?"

One of the leading people in this filed is Karl Frankestein, who developed in the 50's explanations in the basis of which was an assumption regarding the low intellectual ability of Arab countries' Jews [20]. In light if this assumption the Ministry of Education participated with the Hebrew University in a formulation of educational policy in the immigrants' communities, and mainly in the development of a perception according to which the Sephardic pupils require "nurturing", a thing that created the term "pupils that require nurturing" which is in existence until presents day, there is even a mandatory course in the studies for teacher's diploma in the Hebrew University by the name of "children that require nurturing" delivered by the author of this paper in 1989. Nurturing is a means of budgeting that corrects discrimination. In fact, this is a discriminative tool that encourages exclusion.

The ethnic structuration of status inequality in education

In order to look ahead there is a need to deal with the historical foundation. By observing the history of the state of Israel, in 1948-49, the educational system absorbs two groups: the first one, the Palestinians, and the second, Jews that came from Arab countries. The absorption of the two new groups differs from one another. The Palestinians have been put behind a wall (presently – the west bank Barrier) the separation is expressed in various fields, including unequal allocation almost in every aspect [15]. Regarding the second group of Jews from Arab countries, a wall has been erected as well, when the Jewish settlement has become enclosed in various aspects, also in residential field, occupational field and in the field of education. They resided in new territories, with problems of area development, in new and separate neighborhoods, and therefore a situation has been created in which 80% of the Sephardic children have been studying in separate schools or classes from veteran Ashkenazi children.

In the 60's, all the inequality tools have been implemented, due to a lack of investment in new pupils, especially the Jewish ones. The tools have been invented in the US which has undergone a similar process in the 20's of the previous century following the massive immigration waves into the United States (Progressive Movement).

The first tool: grouping. Division of children in a class into three levels; A, B, C while the high level receives the best program, the best teacher, the best treatment and as the level is descended so these are lower and lower. The groupings have become, in a short period of time, a fundamental ingredient of the inequality within the educational system, first in classes that are mostly Sephardic, later in mixed classes and finally the Sephardic remaining in the lower groupings, and the children of the veteran population in the higher ones. The grouping has begotten an idea that when we arrive in High school we will get the form of, for instance, who studies this and that number of study units in real subjects.

The second tool: vocational education. Creation of two study courses in High school education: theoretical study course and vocational study course. This tool has been implemented by Zalman Aran, the Minister of Education on 1965 which brought about a rise in pupils arriving to High school.

In the late 70's, these two tools have been united into a form called tracking. These tools have been accompanied by further tools such as the human tool of "educational consultant" who sits in the school and routes pupils, as well as the definition of pupils that require nurturing. All these tools are with us presently as well: tracking, grouping, vocational education, definition of requiring nurturing, and have brought about disintegration, increase in gaps between levels of school, between new communities, between development towns and neighborhoods, and the established neighborhood [15].

The method of grouping and tracking began in the United States in 1920 after World War I, following the Administrative Progressive belief. The idea of separation of class pupils into groups has spread across the United States with the use of intelligence tests. According to the intelligence test the grouping is turned out: the division into three levels, A, B, C when the highest level (20%) receives the best, enriched program, the best teacher, the best treatment, and when children descend to grouping B (20%) they receive a regular program, and in grouping C (20%) the program is diluted [3].

Educational administrations used the tests to separate pupils according the grouping ability. The tests served to isolate pupils with difficulties and/or gifted ones.

Grouping in Israel

In the early 60's the grouping methods have been implemented in Israel. They might have had the same reasons as in the US in the 20's despite the failures of groupings C and D, here in Israel they did not care

about it and implemented the grouping and tracking reform; however, the society in Israel was different than that of the US. Most of the new immigrants have been from Arab countries considered as "outside-civilization" in the world. In 1950, Ben-Gurion said, "a big part of the immigrants arrive without knowing the alphabet, without a trace of Jewish or human education, and as a result the willingness that the veterans revealed regarding the fact that their children sit beside the children of the new immigrants in the class was minor" [14].

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In same spirit, a similar approach has evolved in the educational system in the basis of which is the educational perception that "the child is in the center", has bred separate study courses and inferior in level. The method of vocational education has created two study courses: theoretical study course and vocational study course. This tool has been implemented by Zalman Aran, the Minister of Education on 1965 which brought about a rise in pupils arriving to High school. In late 70's, the two tools of grouping and vocational education have been united into a form called tracking.

Purposes of the grouping system

Oppositely to the common opinion, the primary motive (at least the official one) for implementation of grouping method was not the desire to allow strong pupils to progress faster. Groupings have been implemented as early as in the 60's, in order to better cope with the weak pupils, in fact, those called "that require nurturing" and who belonged then – as well as today – to the weakened socio-economic levels. The claim was that in order to reduce the study gap accumulated by these pupils they need to be taught separately with suitable methods with an emphasis of instilling basics.

One should ask then, has the grouping method reduced study gaps since it was implemented in Israel? The scene as it is reflected from a multitude of studies done on this subject in Israel and the world is quite the opposite. It seems that in actual fact, the grouping method increases study and social gaps, and comprises a focal part in the tracking mechanism (division to tracks) in the educational system, and thus determines, at least partially, the status-professional choice of graduates of the system.

It is important to emphasize that the vast majority of low groupings' pupils are not pupils who have been diagnosed as requiring special education, or as those who are not capable of meeting the requirements of the educational system. Various experimental programs (formal and non-formal), that exist in limited scope, have proven that upon suitable conditions given these pupils, they in fact reach high study achievements, including a full matriculation certificate.

Nonetheless, data from several comprehensive studies, conducted in various years, show that the majority of pupils who study in vocational schools, or in vocational study courses in comprehensive schools, and have attended lower groupings in the Junior High school. Moreover, the grouping a pupil attended in Junior High school is the strongest predicting factor for his assignment to a study course, and is a stronger predictive factor than the level of achievements of the pupil in class subjects, his place of origin, education of his parents, expectations of his parents and expectation of the pupil.

Why groupings? The grouping method is not a mistake of the system, just as the fact that less than half of the pupils in Israel receive a matriculation certificate is not a failure of the system. The history of the educational system is strewn with programs and reforms with characteristics similar to those of the grouping method – vocational education, 'nurturing policy', B standard, comprehensive schools – all have been created in order to reduce gaps, and especially to assist pupils "requiring nurturing", and all of them failed. For some reason the gaps remained. The educational system, apparently, does not aspire at actual reduction of gaps, and does not attempt to get all the pupils to achievements that are valuable for their future. The developed vocational educational system can testify to this; there has never been an attempt to cancel it [17].

There are means to really reduce gaps – making the classes smaller (and not bigger, as is planned to be done soon) is just one of them, while studies in Israel and around the world testify to its great effectiveness. However the educational system in Israel is a tracking system that performs a role of prior selection for the higher education and employment systems. The significant practical selection is conducted in High school; however, the Junior High school, as well as the Primary school, is forced as a chain effect to be part of the sorting system. The grouping method is also quite a significant cog in this machine and as such it is quite successful.

Throughout the years, those 'requiring nurturing' have been replaced with 'under-achievers', 'survey tests' have been replaced with a long and complex tracking process, and the C grouping has been given many names as well, until presently it is difficult for parents (and especially those whose children are the primary victims) to notice what is being done right under their nose – in the school. The more places an intense public discussion on the educational policy questions takes place in, while a profound media exposure of the way the system operates (and not just of the current failing study program for reading or math), there will be a higher chance for a wider public to be aware of and act for a change in the system, towards a less discriminative direction, and for the direction of resources and policy towards a true social progress [17].

The significance of grouping

The level of pupil's grouping has an intense and significant effect upon his placing in a study track in High school, as comparing to the effect of "significant others" [18]. It has been found that groupings have become a key sorting tool that serves as a basis for the future assignment of pupils in separate study tracks in High school. As there are separate opportunities for achieving a matriculation certificate in the various tracks, and in light of the meaning of this certificate in determining the chances of their future education, it can be determined that the sorting of pupils in 7th grade has a continuous effect upon the pupil's career [9].

Another possible reason for the great significance of grouping in term of assignment in 10th grade is its positive effect on the pupil and his social environment. The fact of selection of the pupil to one grouping level or another, might affect his social status at school as this selection is prominent in the daily life of school much more than the grades the pupil achieves in exams and in certificates. The self-image of the pupil and his perception of the attitude of significant others towards him, and following this – the designing of his future goals in the field of education – all these might be affected significantly by his assignment to grouping levels in key study subjects. Harter [4] claims that the self-esteem of an adolescent is based on his performance in the field in which success is important. Len, Hackett and Brown [7] reinforce this statement by claiming that people tend to choose purposes that correspond to their beliefs regarding their ability and regarding the anticipated outcomes of that choice.

Seginer [12] as well claims that parents transfer belief over to their children that correspond to their actual achievements. Therefore, grades in school might predict the professional choice of pupils, who adjust their choice to their achievements, as reflected from their assignment to the grouping levels in Junior High school.

Tracking

Definition: creation of separate tracks in High school education between theoretical education and vocational education. The original purpose of creation of vocational schools was pulling adolescents out of the streets and training them to integrate in society. Over the years, the vocational schools turned into an escape for those pupils who had difficulties in theoretical schools and thus affixing the gaps between the two types of schools. Although presently there is academization of vocational schools, a trend that their graduates would receive a vocational certificate, only a small percentage as compared to attendants of theoretical schools is eligible to matriculation certificate. Thus circumstantial tracking turns into permanent tracking, while already at a young age the future of the child is decided upon.

Tracking is divided into two parts. *Personal directing*: in certain communities the conditions for acceptance to High schools are determined according to the average of a pupil's grades – a relatively low average sends the pupils to a vocational school and a high average to a theoretical one. *Area directing*: done according to areas of registration. The division of the town to areas of registration (to school) determines to which school children of the town are affiliated – vocational or theoretical.

Tracking in the Arab sector

The idea of equality is not striving toward a society based on equality, but a striving towards a society in which the inequality is divided equally between the various ethnicities [6].

Tracking policy, nurturing policy, have brought about a grade of discrimination of the Arab population in Israel, as well as set the way and price of their being accepted to the mainstream. If they are behind the wall of military rule – and presently there is no military rule, but the education is separate – there is discrimination in groupings. There is discrimination of means. And thus we are faced with a seemingly absurd situation, in which groups of Arab educators are being organized who say that they want vocational education as well. "Why don't you give it to us? You discriminate us. We also want consulting teachers and we want psycholo-

gists". And then, this defines also the price of the acceptance of Palestinians who are citizens of the state, to the Israeli educational system. This is expressed in a very simple manner, when a delegation of heads of Arab communities met with Isaac Rabin in 1994-95, and asked him for a budget of a developing town. Meaning, this determined the ceiling that is the aspired limit, going above which is probably not possible [14].

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