

Optimal models for dealing with diversity among pupils

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Diversity among students is expressed in both a demographic aspect, such as gender or origin, and an educational aspect, such as learning achievements or learning style. This review examines optimal educational models for addressing diversity among pupils in Israel and in the world, on a local or system-wide level. The models were analyzed according to a range of categories from the literature and field of research; these categories relate to the implementation of models with various positive outputs, from a policy or research perspective. The goal of the models described in this review is to address the diversity of pupils; the models focus on the field of general studies, as well as the scientific, mathematical or linguistic fields, in a range of countries and in various age groups.

The need to address diversity is of crucial importance for the pupils' future, in order to prepare them for higher education, the choice of a profession, and future positions in the work force. The review discusses how to deal with diversity among pupils and raises key questions: Is diversity a problematic educational situation that we should try to reduce – for example, by adapting schools or educational tracks to distinguish between pupils? Should the education system focus on strengthening the unique characteristics of each individual in the classroom and school in order to advance the learning and educational objectives of the entire class?

The review presents models that adopt various approaches for dealing with diversity – through encouragement and support for underachievers; by formulating uniform standards for all pupils that will provide equal learning opportunities; and via specific intervention programs based on particular background variables that create disparity among pupils.

The review also presents recommendations for adapting the various models to the education system in Israel, in accordance with the different characteristics that exist today, with the goal of helping to promote the achievements of all pupils.