

Informal Education for Children, Teenagers and Youth in Israel

Testimonies from the Field and a Learning Process Summary

Coordinated and edited by
Naomi Mandel-Levy and Itai Artzi



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Project Report

Executive Summary

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Translated from the Hebrew original

Jerusalem, 2016

The Initiative for Applied Education Research
The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities

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Language Editor (Hebrew original): Ada Paldor

English Translation: Judyth Eichenholz

Proofing and production: Ayala Vlodaysky

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The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities was founded in 1959. Its membership currently comprises close to 100 top Israeli scientists and scholars. The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Law, 1961, declares that its principal objectives and tasks are to foster and promote scientific activity; to advise the Government on research activities and scientific planning of national importance; to maintain ties with foreign academies of science; to represent Israeli science at international institutes and conferences; and, to publish articles that can further science.

The Initiative for Applied Education Research (the Initiative) places up-to-date, scientific, critically-appraised knowledge and information at the disposal of decision-makers in the field of education. This kind of information is crucial for the intelligent formulation of policy and for optimal planning of interventions to improve educational achievements in Israel.

The Initiative's vision: Research knowledge is an essential component for planning public policy or comprehensive interventions. In the planning phase, critically-appraised research knowledge supports the formulation of policy whose chance of success is greater, and at a later point, enables rational public discourse to take place. The Initiative implements this vision in the field of education.

The Initiative's method of operation: The issues the Initiative addresses are those raised by decision-makers and it consults with senior Ministry of Education officials and other stakeholders. The Initiative's steering committee, appointed by the president of the Israel Academy, is responsible for the Initiative's work program and the peer-review processes of documents it creates.

The Initiative operates by means of expert committees and by convening joint symposia for researchers, professionals in the field and decision-makers. It publishes a variety of reports and makes them available to the public. Members of expert committees carry out their work on a voluntary basis.

History of the Initiative: The Initiative was established in late 2003 as a joint venture of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Ministry of Education, and the Rothschild Foundation (Yad Hanadiv). Since the beginning of 2010, the Initiative has been operating as a unit of the Israel Academy. In the summer of 2010, the Israeli Knesset amended the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities Law, regulating the Israel Academy's advisory role vis-à-vis government ministries seeking its consulting services. The Initiative directs the consulting activities on education related issues which the Israel Academy provides to the government and various authorities.

The Informal Education Expert Team

The steering committee of the Initiative for Applied Education Research established an expert team in response to a request from a philanthropic foundation to guide a learning process on the topic of informal education in Israel. The objectives of this process were:

- To develop familiarity with theory in the field
- To develop an initial familiarity with practice and practitioners in Israel
- To understand methods of operation used in the field (in Israel and abroad) which research has found to be effective in promoting social, academic or other aims

The concept “informal education” serves as a gateway to a wide world of objectives, organizations, methods of operation, target audiences, and players in the field. Different researchers define the field in different ways and the array of definitions covers different types of learning that take place throughout life as well as specific educational activity intended for a certain audience and characterized by defined goals and aims (for example, participation in a youth movement or learning computer skills late in life). Consistent with the richness of goals and the different needs of the diverse target audiences, it is also an arena filled with multiple players and, by its very nature, devoid of a central governing body. The main players in the informal education field are government ministries, local government authorities, the non-profit sector and the business sector.

The tradition of informal education in Israel has existed since before the founding of the State. Over the years, informal education has become more diverse – both in its goals and methods of operation – paralleling changes in society, leisure culture, needs and lifestyles.

The expert team’s learning process was spread over the period of a year with the goal of mapping part of the widespread activities that take place in the field and in order to create an initial empirical and conceptual infrastructure.

Expert team members:

Prof. Shlomo Romi (Chair) – Bar-Ilan University
Ms. Nasreen Hadad Haj-Yahya – Tel Aviv University
Prof. Gad Yair – Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Dr. Hagit Klibansky – Beit Berl Academic College

Expert team coordinators:

Dr. Naomi Mandel-Levy
Itai Artzi

Acknowledgements

This report is the outcome of the dedicated efforts of many partners from academia and from the field. With the completion of this report, we would like to thank everyone who contributed of their time, expertise and good will to the learning process and to concluding this report.¹

Study session guests

We would like to thank Prof. Shlomo Romi, the expert team's chairperson, who guided and led the learning process wisely, and patiently. We thank the expert team members, Ms. Nasreen Hadad Haj-Yahya, Prof. Gad Yair, and Dr. Hagit Klibansky, who voluntarily dedicated many hours of their time to reading scientific literature reviews and background materials related to the activity and to participating in the frequently-held study sessions. We thank all the study session guests who enriched us with their knowledge and experience.

First session guests: Ms. Duria Abu Eita, director, Education Division in the Taibe municipality; Mr. Eli Dror, VP operations, the Ofanim Association; Ms. Sivan Goldman, director, community centers in the Gilboa regional council; Ms. Haya Gozlan, director, Youth and Society Unit, Association for Informal Education, Netanya municipality; Mr. Adir Kan, executive director, the Ofanim Association; Mr. Ronen Kovalsky, director, field headquarters, Administration for Community Program Development, the Community Centers Association; Mr. Hanan Rafie, deputy and acting council head, education portfolio, Mevaseret Zion; Ms. Hadara Rosenblum, deputy director, Social-Community Division – Students and Youth, Ministry of Education; Ms. Bat El Revital Swissa, director, Municipal Youth Division, Kiryat Gat municipality.

Second session guests: Mr. Yonatan (Jonny) Ariel, director, "Makom" program, the Jewish Agency for Israel; Dr. Yael Bernholtz, consultant to the Content Division, Training and In-Service Programs, Youth and Society Administration, Ministry of Education; Ms. Rotem Bursztyn-Nimni, graduate, Informal Education Program, Beit Berl College and program director, Children's Division, Ashalim-JDC; Mr. Yaron Girsh, program coordinator, Mandel Program for Educational Leadership in Youth Movements; Professor Zehavit Gross, head, Informal Education Systems Development and Management track, Bar-Ilan University; Ms. Nelly Markman, training coordinator, Scouts Movement; Professor Mordecai Nisan, director, Mandel Program for Educational Leadership in Youth Movements; Professor Revital Sela-Shayovitz, head, Informal Education Department, David Yellin College; Mr. Yossi Zaguri, supervisor, Administration for Rural Education, Boarding Schools, and Youth Aliya, Ministry of Education; Ms. Debbie Zarud, student studying for Bachelor's degree, Youth Advancement track, Informal Education Department, David Yellin College.

Third session guests: Mr. Amitzur Damari, head, Young Adults Division, JDC-Israel; Mr. Shaul De Malach, secretary-general, Ezra Youth Movement; Mr. Naftali Deri, secretary-general, Council

¹ The names appearing below are listed in alphabetical order by surname; the position or affiliation listed is as it was at the time the report was written.

of Youth Movements; Ms. Shany Granot, coordinator, voluntary post-secondary year of service, “B’Maagal” (outdoor training); Mr. Yossi Malka, executive director, “Maase”; Mr. Tony Nasser, coordinator, Arab sector dens, “Noar Ha’Oved Vehlomed” youth movement; Mr. Benny Printz, executive director, Garin Torani community, city of Lod; Mr. Itai Zaidenberg, secretary-general, HaShomer HaTzair; Mr. Alon Ziv, director, Social Investments, Shahaf Foundation.

Fourth session guests: Mr. Majed Abu-Blal, executive director, Association for Conductive Education in Israel; Mr. Ali Abu Alkean, director, Community Center, Hura; Mr. Nabeh Abu-Saleh, director, Education Department, Sakhnin municipality; Ms. Nawal Abu-Eissa, head, Culture and Community Division, Beit HaGefen and head, Arab Community and Sector Division, Haifa municipality; Mr. Weam Baloum, steering committee, Baladna Association for Arab Youth; Mr. Nael Kadry, director, Youth Unit, Tira municipality; Mr. Adel Khatib, deputy director, Northern District, Community Centers Association; Mr. Asaf Ron, executive director, Beit HaGefen; Ms. Qamar Taha, program coordinator, Baladna Association for Arab Youth.

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The learning excursion

We would like to thank the hosts of our learning excursion, who enabled us to learn about characteristics and challenges confronting development and advancement of the informal education field. From Mifalot Education and Society Enterprises: Ms. Tal Laibman, training coordinator, Special Needs Division; Mr. Meiron Levy, director, Galilee region; Mr. Shahar Kama, director, Amakim region. From Avantgarde: Ms. Noa Ehrlich, professional director and director of volunteers; Mr. Dayan Asad, director, Youth Department, Osafiya; Ms. Shadia Kayouf, director, Avantgarde’s Osafiya branch; Ms. Orly Klimshtein Peled, founder and CEO. Mr. Ofer Israeli, founder, Shomrei HaGan organization. Thanks to Mr. Ran Label, executive director of IGY, Israel Gay Youth and to Ms. Inbar Harush-Gity, executive director of Aharai! (Follow Me!), all of whom met with us and helped us learn about youth organizations.

Scientific literature reviews

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Holland and Ontario, Canada. Our thanks also goes to Ms. Shlomit Shimron, an organizational advisor to education, society and community systems and to Ms. Karen Weiss, deputy director of the Avi Chai Foundation, and to Dr. Liora Pascal, director of the Research, Measurement and Assessment Division at the Avi Chai Foundation, who met with us and assisted us in planning and implementing collection of information in order to form a depiction of the status of informal education in Mevaseret Zion.

We also thank those who contributed to enriching the review on informal education in museums, libraries, sports organizations and conservatoriums: Ms. Reut Ferster, director of the Education Department at the Petach Tikva Museum of Art, Ms. Miriam Posner, director of Beit Ariella – Shaar Zion and the Libraries Division of the Tel Aviv municipality.

Respondents from the general public to the team's call for information

In the summer of 2015, the expert community issued a call to the public to submit information about existing projects in the field of informal education. We thank all those who responded: Ms. Efrat Aharoni; Prof. Dorit Aram; Ms. Idit Ariel; Ms. Morit Avraham; Mr. Micha Balf; Mr. Moish Berdichev; Mr. Lior Caspi; Mr. Shimron Cohen; Dr. Elie Cohen-Gewerc; Mr. Ido Frommer; Dr. Orit Gilor; Ms. Noa Hoffner; Professor Yehuda Kedar; Dr. Harry Langbeheim; Mr. Ori Malkin; Mr. Daniel Ophir; Dr. Zvi Paltiel; Ms. Ayelet Peretz; Mr. Rami Raz; Dr. Shoshi Reiter; Mr. Chanan Rosenberg; Mr. Yochai Rotenberg; Dr. Tammy Shel; Ms. Rivka Stentzler; Ms. Shiri Tal; and, Mr. Kobi Weiss.

The Initiative staff

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This report underwent the customary independent peer review process. The report editors are grateful for the review which helped ensure its clarity, quality and non-dependence. The editors takes full responsibility for its contents.

Naomi Mandel-Levy, Coordinator

Itai Artzi, Coordinator

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Executive Summary

This report summarizes a year long learning process in the field of informal education for children, teenagers and youth in Israel. Its main purpose is to briefly present and describe a small fraction of activities and practitioners working the Israeli non-formal education scene – their objectives, methods of activity, achievements, as well as the challenges and obstacles with which they cope. The title, “Informal Education for Children, Teenagers and Youth in Israel,” is reflected in everyday life in innumerable activities of different types that have varied goals and which are operated and funded by a diverse range of organizations and institutions – governmental, local, philanthropic, and private. In this learning process we sought to meet with the central players in the field and also with a range of organizations and institutions in the area of informal education.

Informal education: Definition and its Israeli characteristics

There is no single accepted definition of informal education. For the purpose of this report, informal education is defined as an organized and systematic educational activity (Coombes & Ahmed, 1974; Hamadache, 1991) that takes place outside the formal education system and provides unique patterns of education to diverse groups in the population in order to attain defined educational goals – knowledge acquisition and skills (such as, cultivating or training in personal abilities and competencies), leisure education and recreational activities or ideological education (Klibansky, 2007; in Hebrew). It is a pattern of education characterized by a unique code whose main attributes are its voluntary nature – free choice with respect to joining, participating, or leaving the activity; symmetry – reciprocal contact based on equal relations; moratorium – broad permission for trial and error; multi-dimensional activity – activities characterized by a wide range of skills of equal value; recreation and productivity; peer supervision – oversight through explanation and persuasion rather than through prohibition (Kahana, 2007; in Hebrew).

Klibansky (2008; in Hebrew) describes the characteristics of informal education in Israel. One central attribute is the perception that informal education is an activity intended mainly for children and teenagers (up to age 18). The emphasis on the young ages stems from the common perception of the period of childhood and adolescence as the stage of formative and significant education, and is also due to the fact that during the period of the *yishuv* (the Jewish population living in Israel prior to the establishment of the state), informal education was shaped mainly by the youth movements and was later absorbed by the Ministry of Education. Another attribute is multiplicity and diversity, on the one hand, and lack of a center, on the other. In other words, in Israel there is an abundance of initiatives and initiators in the field of informal education and diversity is seen in almost every aspect and dimension: goals and content, methods of action, sponsors and funding sources, the academic background and professional experience of those involved in the field, the type and methods of staff training, the scope of activities and their dissemination. The multiplicity and diversity enlarge the individual’s freedom of choice, broaden the selection available to different populations with different needs, but often create overlap and duplication

with respect to both content and resources. Needless to say, there is no official organization in Israel today whose role is to support and assist entrepreneurs in the field of informal education in terms of guidance, mentoring, advice and logistics. Such an organization would be able to assist in creating connections and cooperation between organizations promoting similar aims and likewise, in pooling knowledge and resources. In sum, informal education in Israel is a large field in which many autonomous organizations operate in line with their objectives, their target audience, and their ability to raise funds. Generally speaking, cooperation between organizations is minimal or occurs on an ad hoc basis in order to promote a specific issue. Furthermore, many of the organizations active in the field do not view themselves as part of the informal education scene.

A wide-ranging view of this field in Israel reveals the significant disparity between the level of development of informal education in the Arab sector and the Jewish sector. The gap is expressed in the number of activities, their quality and in the significant shortage of physical infrastructure in Arab localities, such as courts for sports, community centers, structures designated for youth activities. The low place occupied by informal education on the agenda of Arab sector local authorities is expressed by the fact that until recently, most Arab local authorities did not appoint a Youth Unit director. Likewise, most local authorities in the Arab sector are ranked among the low socioeconomic clusters, a fact that makes it difficult for them to allocate budgets for informal education activities held in cooperation with other organizations that require full or matching funding. In addition, in the Jewish sector, there are foundations that fund activities and also do so in the Arab sector, but often to a lower extent. Agbaria (2007; in Hebrew) argues that the two most significant players in informal education in the Arab sector are the Ministry of Education's Youth and Society Administration and the Israel Association of Community Centers. These two entities create content and activities for the Arab sector, but these are often translated from Hebrew to Arabic and are not necessarily culturally appropriate. Moreover, broad swaths of informal education activities in the Arab sector are overseen by the state, a situation which may reduce the motivation to participate.

In recent years, the "Local Authorities Law (the Director of the Youth Unit and Student and Youth Council), 2011," has brought about an organizational change in the local authorities and in the coming years, might impact the entire field. The purpose of the law is to anchor in legislation the status and role of the director of the Youth Unit in local authorities which number at least 1,000 children and teenagers. The law defines the role of the Youth Unit director in local authorities as responsible for informal education and for student and youth councils in the director's locality. For the time being, the law is not supported by resources and only very loosely defines the role of the Youth Unit director and as such, its influence on the field is as yet unknown. At the same time, it may have the potential to be an organizational platform for promoting and improving the field in the future.

Course of work: academic expert team and knowledge gathering

The learning process was spread over one year and included four concentrated study-session days in which practitioners in the field presented their activities and shared their experience in the field; visits to three informal education organizations; a literature review of informal education frameworks in Germany, Holland, and Ontario, Canada; a snapshot of mapping informal education activities in Mevaseret Zion and selected examples of museums, libraries and sports organizations that offer informal activities in Israel and other countries. Information about informal education activities was also collected via a call for information made to the general public.

Like the learning process as a whole, the report, does not presume to present a systematic, comprehensive and complete picture of the field of informal education in Israel. Nonetheless, it briefly presents a non-exhaustive description of three “big” issues in the field of informal education for children, teenagers and youth in Israel: the first – modes of exposure and opportunities to participate in informal education activities; the second – the world of mission based communities and its relationship to informal education; and, the third – training staff. Another weighty issue examined is informal education in the Arab sector. Since most of this document is based on reports from the field, it does not present recommendations for action and only offers a description of the teams’ main findings.

Brief description of the three “big issues”

1. Opportunities of exposure to informal education

For those participating in its activities, informal education has the potential of summoning a meaningful long-term learning experience, often of an elemental nature. In this respect, exposure to informal education is an opportunity and a means of narrowing gaps between socioeconomic classes but at the same time, can serve as a corridor to their expansion. Below is a brief description of channels of exposure to informal education that were discussed during the learning process:

Local authorities: The local authority plays an important role in creating opportunities for exposure to informal education. Today, the degree of the field’s development in the authority depends on the authority’s head agenda, and frequently too, on the demands of the residents. As noted above, aside from the obligation to appoint a director of the Youth Unit, there is currently no “informal education basket of services” that requires the local authority to offer or even to enable any activity in the field of informal education. A local authority head who recognizes the importance of informal education will invest and foster it, will pass budgets in this area and will make sure to appoint a professional to lead this domain. In contrast, the field of informal education can also serve as fertile ground for non-professional appointments and can even not exist at all.

Youth and Society Education Administration: The unit in the Ministry of Education responsible for informal education – whether it takes place in the school setting (for example, through the development of informal pedagogy and curricula on topics of values, identity, ethics, student

council development and leadership, cultivating youth leadership, encouraging volunteerism, encouraging school trips and youth journeys to Poland), or takes place outside of this setting and mainly through the local authorities (for example, through financial support of youth movements, regulation, and training officials in the field). Because the Administration is a governmental arm, exposure to informal education through this channel is nationwide. The Administration's main target audience is seventh to twelfth grade students.³ One of the Administration's flagship programs is the National Student and Youth Council which counts, in all its stages – from primary school up to the national council – 32,000 students from all around the country.

The Israel Association of Community Centers: The Israel Association of Community Centers (cultural, youth and sports centers) is one of the large organizations operating nationwide and which offers exposure to informal education. The community centers are non-profit organizations; any profit resulting from their activities is invested back into the community center. Approximately 700 community centers are scattered throughout 150 out of 250 authorities. There are roughly one and a half million participants in community centers' ongoing activities. The Association promotes three guiding principles: involvement and volunteerism, identity development, and acceptance of the other – although each center and each center director adapts activities to the community's needs – whether in promoting employment, enrichment activity groups, treatment of violence among youth, or any other topic.

Youth movements and youth organizations: In the view of many, the youth movements in Israel are the epitome of informal education and are a significant channel (there are those who would say, the most significant) through which exposure is gained. According to a recently published report concerning the leisure habits of Israeli teenagers, 20% of teens in grades 7 to 12, sampled in a representative survey with respect to SES and gender, reported that they were members of youth movements (Romi & Cohen, 2015; in Hebrew).⁴

Secretary-generals of the movements who participated in our study sessions attested to the fact that most of their members are from younger age groups (up to eighth grade) and from relatively affluent socioeconomic (SES) groups. A Knesset Research and Information Center report (Sheleg Mey-Ami, 2010; in Hebrew) showed that 80% of the members came from upper-middle class SES groups and 20% from a low SES groups. Some of the movements invest a certain amount of effort and resources in disadvantaged areas but indicate that they come up against difficulties in recruiting members from low SES groups. One of the difficulties noted in this context was getting the parents to support the activity, whether due to the lack of their availability as a result of their day-to-day distress, or due to their perception of the youth movement as a factor that undermines

³ The Administration is currently considering expanding the age groups of its target audience to include primary education, on the one hand, and on the other, formalizing the activity with volunteers carrying out a post-secondary year of service and with those in pre-military academies (and perhaps beyond).

⁴ A soon-to-be-published report by RAMA (The National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education) will include data regarding the number of youth movement members. It is important to note that different reports count movement members in different ways (including members from lower grades or without them, with leadership training courses, or without them) and this is the source of the frequently appearing variances between one report and another.

adult authority. In recent years, the Ministry of Education is encouraging and incentivizing youth movements to open new branches in the periphery and even subsidizes the participation of movement members from the periphery (Ibid).

Exposure to youth movements in the Arab sector is a complex issue. In some places, there is something resembling a youth movement under the auspices of political parties (for example, *Hadash*), or religious entities such as the Islamic Movement. Alongside these, in some localities there are special Arab sections of the Zionist youth movements. Thus, for example, the “Working and Studying Youth” movement currently operates in 32 Arab localities; 20% of “The Young Guard” movement’s members are Arabs who belong to “Ajial – The Arab Division of the Young Guard.” As part of the unification of the Boy Scouts with the Girl Scouts, there are five scouting organizations operating in the Arab sector: the Druze Scouts Association, the Arab Catholic Scouts, the Israel Muslim Scouts Association, the Arab Orthodox Scouts and the Arab School Scouts. Beyond the obvious challenge of holding Jewish-Zionist youth movement activity in Arab localities, the movements themselves hold worldviews that do not always correspond to Arab society’s political, cultural and religious views.

Philanthropic foundations and third sector associations: Another route leading to exposure to informal education is through philanthropic foundations and third sector organizations. In contrast with the state, which is obligated to offer universal services throughout the country, foundations and associations put a wide range of considerations into play in selecting their area of activity, their objectives and target groups. Below are a number of prominent characteristics and dilemmas that emerged from the meetings with associations and foundations during our course of study:

- a. **Tension between educating and content expertise:** The content worlds of informal education activities – for example, robotics, the art of soccer – are, at times, seen as a means to attaining broader goals. At the same time, the fact that the content is merely the method does not mean that it plays a secondary role. On the contrary, in order for the content to truly achieve its objective in serving as the “inducement” and as a platform to achieve educational goals, the activity organizers are required to be outstanding on a professional level.
- b. **Cooperation with a local entity:** Organizations that we met with noted the importance of cooperating with a local body, most preferably the local authority or in other cases, local non-profits or local leadership. Cooperation also takes place on the economic level – using a matching funds model – but it is also a way to ensure activity over the long-term and entrenchment through the local organization. During the meetings, representatives of Arab authorities related that it was more difficult for them to propose the idea of matching funds.
- c. **Solution to a local need:** Some of the associations in the field were created with the objective of providing a specific solution for the needs of a specific population.

2. Informal education in mission-based groups and communities

In recent decades cooperative groups of different types have returned to the Israeli socio-cultural landscape, including communities of youth movement alumni, urban *kibbutzim*, and Torah-based groups. At present in Israel, there are approximately 200 cooperative communities in more than 70 localities. About 10,000 people (not including children) are members of these groups. Many of these groups choose to live in Israel's geographic and social periphery – 60% of the communities are located in localities defined as being in the 5-7 SES cluster, and 40% in the 1-4 SES cluster (Dvir, Ohayon & Zivan, 2012; in Hebrew). Most of the communities are made up of people who are not originally from the localities in which they live; about 25% are communities made up of local residents. About 70% of the community members are professionally involved in the education and welfare fields. Their mission is a “life-mission”: they live a cooperative lifestyle, are continually occupied with elucidating and clarifying issues within a framework that is something of a social-community study house, and are involved in fields such as education and welfare – all in an attempt to reduce gaps and to create social change.

An important point to think about, which emerged in the context of mission-based communities, is the tension between the commitment to a “private” agenda – whether the group's or the individual educator's – and the desire to develop and influence that often involves formal establishment in order to receive a “piece of the budgetary pie” and in order to raise the movement's degree of relevancy in the locality and its ability to influence the culture and education scene. This tension raises the profit and loss question inherent in making the field more officially established and organized as opposed to activity that is free of commitment to an agenda dictated by government ministries via support and regulation. The state's involvement in the activity can be subject to a certain loss of freedom – although, frequently, without such support, the activity cannot exist.

3. Training informal education personnel: Formal training and on-the-job training

Except for directors of Youth Units in local authorities or those employed by the Youth and Society Administration, most of the informal education organizations have no legal licensing or official training background requirements of employees as a condition of employment (in contrast to teachers working in formal frameworks). Those working in informal education frequently have professional knowledge or academic backgrounds in diverse fields and most often undergo specialized training, or on-the-job-training at the organization where they work (Silberman-Keller, 2008; in Hebrew). The Youth and Society Administration's Content, Programs, Training and In-Service Education Division provides the training for the informal education position in frameworks subject to Ministry of Education authority. In order to introduce academic rigor into the field, the Youth and Society Administration and the Ministry of Education's Training unit joined with a number of academic institutions and created study tracks for a Bachelor's degree in informal education, granting graduates a B.Ed., an “Education Employee” certificate or a teaching certificate. Each institution offers its own program though they all incorporate theory of informal education and theoretical studies in sociology, developmental psychology, philosophy

of education, and practical experience. In general, there are two main tracks of study: the social community track and the youth advancement track. Differences between the institutions in their programs of study is related to a number of factors: the mix between education and treatment, and the mix between education and management of education systems.

Practical training is an important and inseparable part of the studies. Practical experience enables students to think about educational dilemmas and challenges and to study through active experience (Bekerman & Silberman-Keller, 2004). One of the principles of study in the informal education tracks is the theoreticization of the educational experience. Hence, the educational dilemmas that come up during practical training and internship are conceptualized in the framework of the theoretical courses.

Similar to many other aspects of informal education, in on-the-job training, there is great variation between types of training offered by the different workplaces. Differences are found in the duration of initial training, in professional development over the course of employment, in the objectives of training, and obviously – in the content. Each framework defines its needs, aims, training methods and duration. There are frameworks – the large and established ones – that incorporate formal academic aspects into training, and in contrast, there are frameworks in which the training is itself almost informal in character. Despite these differences, three points of similarity came up in the meetings with respect to on-the-job training – mainly regarding the challenges that this type of training poses.

One main challenge is the diverse educational backgrounds of employees in the field, or the lack of it. As stated above, many non-profits do not require an education degree or a degree in informal education as a condition for employment. Frequently, the prerequisite for employment is related to the area of knowledge in which the organization or institution is involved (for example, the sciences or sports), and the organization focuses and supplements the employee's training in the field of education in general, and in informal education, in particular, occasionally to the point of providing them with lesson plans. In other cases, the organizations seek people with a “gleam in their eyes.” A second challenge in on-the-job training is the high turnover rate of employees in the field. The third challenge relates to the young age of the instructors. In youth movements, some youth organizations, community centers, boarding schools and in non-profits, the instructors are in their twenties (often, in their early twenties). In youth movements, young people of 20+ occupy management and coordination positions and even mentor younger instructors. The instructors' young age is an advantage in that they are close in age to the participants and as a result, their relationships can become more meaningful, for both parties. On the other hand, the instructors' young age means lack of experience and lack of professionalism that is at times welcome, and at times, an impediment.

Main findings

Below are a number of the main findings emerging from the learning process:

Differences in opportunities for exposure to informal education: In Israel, at present, there is no governmental organization that sets policy in the area of informal education and there is no requirement to provide this type of education to any group in the population. The existence of informal education in local authorities is dependent upon the authority head's decisions. Our learning process showed that in this area, there are vast differences between local authority heads' commitment to informal education and their financial support. Clearly, this difference increases, or reduces, opportunities for children, teenagers and youth to be exposed to, or to participate in, activities of this type. The differences in opportunities for informal education is expressed through many other aspects. Thus, for example, the Association of Community Centers operates only in places where the local authority wishes it to do so, and even in these places, the range of activities and their content is, to a great extent, dependent upon the community center's director. A typical and significant difference is also manifest in the activities of philanthropic foundations and non-profit associations. They define their own vision, objectives and aims and work to realize them as they see fit. Such organizations are not obligated to provide universal services and as a result, they also contribute to the great variance between different places.

The unique contribution of young communities to informal education: These communities are formed around an ideological and value-related basis (socialist, religious, artistic, etc.) and generally choose to, together, settle in Israel's socio-geographical periphery, being imbued with the idea of creating long-term social change. The involvement of these communities in the informal education domain is two-fold: first, their members lead informal education activities in the community in which they live, and second, their members are themselves involved in informal study and practice of different types – ideological inquiry, study of Israeli society, volunteerism, etc. While the “community” phenomenon is not new, during the past decade, young communities have flourished and been successful and their numbers are steadily growing.

Formal training versus on-the-job training: Today, it is possible to acquire a degree in informal education through a number of academic colleges for education. However, except for workplaces under the supervision of the Ministry of Education's Youth and Society Administration, such academic study is not viewed as a prerequisite for employment in the field. Many non-profits and other organizations seek people with a “gleam in their eyes,” not necessarily those who possess a formal certificate or experience in education, and they themselves then take on the task of employee training. Moreover, in some places – primarily youth movements – “lack of professionalism” is perceived as one of the field's fundamental characteristics and accordingly, it may also be perceived as an advantage. The tension between spontaneous activity and formal “organized” training which imparts tools, a conceptual basis and the ability to reflect, but impinges, to a degree, upon intuitive, spontaneous practice is one of the defining and challenging tensions characterizing the field as a whole.

Informal education in the Arab sector: There is a significant gap between the level of informal education's development in the Arab sector and its level of development in the Jewish sector. The gap is manifest in the number of activities, their quality and their access to physical infrastructures. Sports fields, community centers, buildings dedicated to youth activities, libraries, etc., public buildings are greatly lacking in Arab localities and make it difficult, from the outset, for informal education activities to take place. In addition, informal education in the Arab sector has two other characteristics that make its development difficult: the first, the lack of a tradition and history of informal education, and the second, stemming to a degree from the first, is the lack of development of activities especially for the Arab sector and an over-reliance on "replicating" and translating activities from the Jewish sector to the Arab sector.

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⁵ For the complete bibliography, see the original Hebrew document.

Brief Bio Sketches: Expert Team

Prof. Shlomo Romi, Chairperson

Prof. Shlomo Romi was head of the School of Education at Bar-Ilan University and today is the director of the university's Institute for Education and Community Research. He received his bachelor's degree and master's degree from Bar-Ilan's Department of Psychology and his PhD from the University of Toronto, Canada. His fields of research include informal education and its characteristics and connection to formal education. He also studies the characteristics of at-risk youth and recently (December 2014) published the first of his two books on at-risk children and adolescents in Israel. Prof. Romi also conducts research in the field of educational psychology, such as classroom management methods and integrating children and adolescents with special needs in normative frameworks. He received his PhD in 1988 from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto, Canada.

Nasreen Hadad Haj-Yahya

Nasreen Hadad Haj-Yahya is a doctoral student in Social Geography at Tel Aviv University's School of History. In her PhD thesis, she examines the impact of social impediments on the inaction of young Arabs of ages 18-22 today and the structuring of their orientation toward the future. Hadad Haj-Yahya focuses on the integration of the Palestinian-Arab minority in the Israeli space. She coordinates Arab educational activity at the Merhavim Institute and leads the "Integrating Arab Teachers in Jewish Schools" project. Since the beginning of the 2012, she has been a researcher in the Arab-Jewish Relations project at the Israel Democracy Institute. She received a master's degree from Tel Aviv University's Department of Geography and Human Environment in 2012.

Prof. Gad Yair

Prof. Gad Yair is a professor of Sociology and Education at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was formerly the academic director of the master's program at the School for Overseas Students, and today directs the Institute for Innovation in Education at Hebrew University. Prof. Yair also holds the Louis and Ann Wolens Chair in Educational Research. His research focuses on the field of motivation and educational inequality, as well as sociological theory in cultural contexts. In recent years, his research has expanded to the field of key educational experiences and their long-term impact on adults. He received his PhD in Sociology from Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1994.

Dr. Hagit Klibansky

Hagit Klibansky is a lecturer at Beit Berl College and at Hemdat Hadarom College for Education. Her research focuses on informal education and the history of education in the Land of Israel and in the State of Israel. In the field of informal education, her research examines the history and policy of informal education, and the integration of young people with disabilities in informal education and its contribution to changing the attitudes of young people who are not disabled. She received a PhD in Informal Education Policy in Israel from Tel Aviv University, 2005.

Brief Bio Sketches of the Activity Coordinators

Itai Artzi

Itai earned a BA from the School of Education and Department of Sociology and Anthropology (2012) and an MA in Sociology (2014), both at Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He previously worked as a research assistant in various departments at Hebrew University and as a teaching assistant at the School of Education and Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

He served as a non-commissioned officer in the IDF, teaching in Bedouin schools in the Negev and in the Mateh Yehuda Regional Council.

Mr. Artzi is currently studying for his Ph.D. degree in sociology, at Tel Aviv University.

Dr. Naomi Mandel-Levy

Naomi Mandel-Levy received a master's degree in Political Science from the University of British Columbia (UBC) in Vancouver, Canada (2001) and a PhD in Political Science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (2008). She has developed programs of study for multicultural groups and learning materials in political science, and has instructed children and teenagers in various educational frameworks, including the Israel National Council for the Child, the Karev Educational Program, and the Israeli Civics and Democracy Educational Centers.

She worked as a writer and developer at the Information Center of the Environment and Health Fund, coordinated the team of experts for "An Education System for All and for Each and Every One" at the Initiative for Applied Education Research, and today – in addition to coordinating the team of experts – is working at the R&D Unit of the Avney Rosha Institute.