



Teachers' Employment Model and Improving Israel's Education System

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This paper demonstrates the importance of the quality of teachers as a determinant of educational success and examines the effect of employment models on the education system's ability to improve in that regard.

The **first chapter** outlines the characteristics of what is considered a “good teacher” and the two models for teachers’ employment: career based vs. position based.

The **second chapter** describes the employment model in Israel and the Dovrat Committee recommendations.

The **third chapter** traces the use of a position-based model in educationally successful countries (the Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, England the Czech Republic, and Denmark).

The **fourth chapter** discusses the question of which is better - raising salaries or changing the employment model?

The paper closes with a summation and recommendations.

Summary:

Despite the increase in government spending, Israel’s education system trails behind those of other developed countries.

The system’s Achilles heel is the quality of its teaching body. A thorough examination of the Israeli education system reveals its failure to draw people of excellence to teaching positions. Yet research on education finds that the quality of the teaching staff is the weightiest determinant of the quality of education, meaning that no improvement to the system will occur without attracting manpower of higher quality.

Both improved training and higher salaries have been put forward as strategies to increase quality. However, although they would have an effect, they would still fail to bring about the desired results. Firstly, such proposals have been attempted in the past. Moreover, a review of the literature and of education practices in other parts of the world demonstrate that the main effective change for improving the quality of the teaching staff and thus the function of the education system as a whole is moving to a more flexible employment model. Adopting such a model grants greater authority to school principals regarding recruitment, setting employment and salary terms, and firing decisions.

Reports from the OECD describe such a shift as a move from a career-based model to a position - based one in which what is centered is the needs of the system and not the teachers’ individual careers. Leading education systems (aside from a few in Asian countries) all employ this model and succeed in drawing talented teaching staff who bring about higher achievement.

In Israel today, teachers in primary and middle schools are employed by the state, which determines all terms of their employment. High school teachers’ terms are determined by the state as well,

albeit in a more circuitous manner. Moreover, the Ministry of Education alone has the authority to employ or to fire teachers. And on top of that, the two teachers' unions, the Israel Teacher's Union (*Histadrut Hamorim*) and the Teachers Association (*Irgun Hamorim*), representing the majority of teachers in Israel, have succeeded in completely blocking any delegation of authority to schools or local authorities as far as teachers' salaries or termination of employment.

Recommendation:

Aside from raising the salaries of new teachers – and as a prerequisite – greater authority should be granted to school principals and local authorities with regards to setting employment conditions and deciding which teachers teach at their schools. Something similar was already recommended by the Dovrat Committee fifteen years ago, and a review of their recommendations shows they had the correct approach, one that should be taken even further. A reform of this nature would bring about a dramatic improvement to the education system in Israel in a matter of years and bolster the image of the teaching profession.

[Full Paper in Hebrew](#)