

The Israel Education Fund as a Catalyst in the Development of Secondary Education in Israel's Periphery in the 1960s and 1970s

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The Israel Education Fund was created in 1964 as a worldwide (but mainly) US Jewish philanthropic initiative to solve the dire need for secondary education in the periphery of Israel. The Fund became an all-encompassing project that expanded to the building of kindergartens, pre-kindergartens, and libraries, and the establishment of teacher-training programs and scholarships for needy students. Between 1964 and 1994, the Fund raised \$167,287,000 (out of the total United Jewish Appeal funds of \$8,483,070,000).¹

The Israel Education Fund's creation coincides with important developments in modern Israeli history: the formation of the state education system, the mass waves of immigration, the consolidation of government bodies, the policy of population dispersion in non-populated areas, and the ongoing security situation.

Secondary education in the periphery, which hitherto had been limited to mainly vocational training schools, was transformed by the construction of several dozen comprehensive high schools and other educational facilities. Despite the scope of its projects, the Israel Education Fund is

* This article is based on the author's recent master's thesis "Politics of Philanthropy: The Creation and Work of the Israel Education Fund 1964-1967," completed under the supervision of Dr Paula Kabalo, for the Israel Studies International MA Program of the Ben-Gurion Research Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism.

1 Leon Levitas (former Jewish Agency representative of the Israel Education Fund), interview by Esther Suissa, Jerusalem, 29 November 2012. See "Statistics of the Israel Education Fund 1994", from Levitas' private collection. The above sum includes Project Renewal but does not include US grants.

virtually unknown to most Israelis, and to the general Jewish world. As Eliezer Shmueli, former CEO of the Ministry of Education and a key figure in the Fund, related, “Just as we don’t make an effort to find out who the people behind the street names are, we do not try to find out who are people behind the names of our schools.”² Yet schools such as Boyer, Himmelfarb, Gross, Steinberg, and Rogozin have become synonymous with high-standard educational institutions in today’s society in Israel.

This article is an attempt to shed light on the Fund’s influence on the Israeli educational system in the periphery. The steps leading to its creation indicate the importance the different bodies gave to this Fund in order to ensure its success. Geographically, the Fund constructed schools mainly in development towns in the north and south of Israel, although certain facilities were built in the center of the country. The Fund was instrumental in creating the Israeli public library network and the network of community centers (*Matnasim*), the Israeli equivalent of the American JCCs (Jewish Community Centers).³ The Fund also extended its activities to teacher-training programs in response to the dire need for qualified teachers in the periphery; this problem together with the lack of educational facilities had created large gaps in education between periphery and center.⁴

Socio-Economic Reality in Israel of the 1950s and 1960s

By the end of its first decade of statehood, Israel was a full-fledged state with a population of two million Jews, a judicial and democratic system with regular elections, and an educational system with compulsory

2 Eliezer Shmueli, “Israel Rogozin: To Study or to Cease to Exist,” *Hed Hahinuch* (2010): 128-129 [Hebrew].

3 Ralph Goldman, the first CEO of the Fund, maintains that it was he who brought the JCC model to Israel, even though others took credit for it. See: Ralph Goldman, interview by Esther Suissa, Jerusalem, 7 November 2011.

4 Nirit Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System: Between Centralism and Distribution, Clarity and Ambiguity, Replication and Ingenuity* (Jerusalem: Machon Mofet, 2008), esp. 123-4 [Hebrew].

schooling from the age of five until the end of eighth grade (1949 Compulsory Education Law). After an initial period of austerity, the economic situation in the second decade after independence improved, and the standard of living rose, due partly to the reparations from Germany.⁵ However, the veteran immigrants progressed much more quickly than the new immigrants. Ethnic tensions heightened as socio-economic gaps widened between veteran citizens of (mainly) Ashkenazi origin and more recent new immigrants, mainly from North Africa (and central and eastern Europe). The 1959 *Wadi Salib* events highlighted ethnic tensions between new immigrants and veterans, and one of the conclusions of the public committee established in response to the riots clearly described the urgent need to improve *education* among the new immigrants.⁶

The massive waves of immigration also influenced the social fabric of Israel society. The “primitive” character and “lack of productivity” of the new immigrants from Muslim lands (*Mizrachim* or Sephardic Jews) were described in the press.⁷ There was a fear that the new immigrants would undermine the social-cultural heritage of the state. Ben-Gurion stated,

The vast majority of them [Oriental Jews] are lacking in everything. They are without the property and capital wealth that was taken from them, and are also bereft of the education and culture that was never given them.⁸

However, there was also optimism that the solution lay in education.

5 David Shaham, *Israel, Fifty Years: The First Decade* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1998), 191 [Hebrew].

6 Israel State Archives (ISA), 17.8.59, “Wadi Salib Report of the Public Investigation Committee on the events of July 9, 1959”. It is interesting that there were no outbursts of violence in development towns in the periphery, perhaps due to the homogeneity of these towns and the lack of contact of their residents with veteran residents.

7 Moshe Lissak, “The Demographic-Social Revolution in Israel in the 1950s: The Absorption of the Great Aliyah,” *The Journal of Israeli History* 22. 2 (2003): 1-31.

8 *Ibid.*

The state education system therefore became a central tool in creating a “new Jew” and ensuring the new immigrants’ attachment to the country. This was an essential goal of the *mamlachti* or state system.⁹

The state’s population dispersion policy of the 1950s sent new immigrants, mostly from Muslim lands, to populate remote development towns in order to solve the dire housing shortage in the center.¹⁰ This policy was part of the “Sharon Plan” that adopted the British “New Town Policy” aimed at preventing city slums and establishing new communities of modest size outside existing population centers.¹¹ Thirty development towns were established, including Dimona, Ofakim, Yerucham, and Kiryat Shmona. Many of these towns soon became completely dependent on the central government for investments, jobs, and education. The term “development” lost its positive connotation of a place of nurturing, and instead, for the general public, this word became synonymous with “weakness”.¹²

The Israeli Secondary Education System in the Periphery

The revolution created by the comprehensive school system in the periphery, of which the Israel Education Fund was a central part, can be understood only by reviewing Israeli peripheral secondary education up to and during the 1960s. Prior to 1948 and in the first two decades of statehood, secondary education was mostly private. In the 1960s, only 12.5% of Israeli high school age children attended high school.¹³

9 Tali Tadmor-Shimoni, *National Education and Formation of State of Israel* (Sde-Boker: Ben-Gurion Research Institute, 2010), esp. 4 [Hebrew].

10 Ma’abarot, or transitional neighborhoods, which had been established adjacent to many cities in order to accommodate the thousands of immigrants, became slum neighborhoods in the 1960s. No additional ma’abarot were created after this time.

11 S. Ilan Troen, “New Departures in Zionist Planning: The Development Town,” in *Israel: The First Decade of Independence*, ed. S. Ilan Troen and Noah Lucas (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 441-460.

12 *Ibid.*, 441.

13 Compulsory secondary education in the United States had been established by 1941. In England, education was made compulsory to age 15 in 1944, and in 1970 this was raised to 16. The idea of compulsory education by law was

High schools in the major cities were not government funded but run by strong municipalities or public organizations such as ORT, AMAL, or Mizrahi women, or by the kibbutzim (some were “recognized but not official” *mukar she’eyno rishmi* schools).¹⁴ In 1953, there were 540,000 pupils in Israel in total, of whom 75,000 were in kindergartens and 390,000 in elementary schools.¹⁵ Only 50,000 pupils attended high school nationwide, mainly in private sector academic schools, with the remainder attending vocational schools.

The fact is that non-academic or vocational education was the only education in development towns prior to 1964. The situation was acute: there was no tradition of academic secondary education or infrastructure. Eliezer Shmueli described the tragic situation in the late 1950s as one in which many young people with intellectual potential were “lost” as a result of a lack of secondary schools.¹⁶ A small number of pupils were sent to Youth Aliya villages, and gifted pupils were sent to special boarding schools in the center of the country, but most immigrant parents wanted their children to study close to home. The gravity of the situation is evident from a recent doctoral dissertation on the first decade of the city of Dimona (1955-1965), in which Danielle Riche describes effective anarchy, with hundreds of teenagers wandering the streets out of school, becoming a danger to the public.¹⁷

During the first two decades of statehood, state education policy concentrated on implementing the government’s declared objective of creating a *productive Jew* willing to work in industry or agriculture, even though in practice this goal mainly targeted new immigrants and not

not widespread in the world. Israel was one of the few countries that passed such a law. See Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System*, 282.

14 “Recognized but not official” – this term is used to describe independent schools that receive government funding. Eliezer Shmueli, interview by Esther Suissa, Netivot, 30 October 2012.

15 Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System*, 119.

16 Shmueli, interview.

17 Danielle Riche, “Dimona – First Decade and its Role in the City’s Development” (PhD diss., University of Haifa, 2001), esp. 194-209.

the veteran residents.¹⁸ *Iyuni* or academic education was not considered necessary, and was considered contrary to the Zionist ideology of the physical return of Jews to the Land of Israel. Vocational training was seen as more suitable to the immigrants' cognitive aptitudes, and instrumental in creating the necessary manpower for Israel's growing industrial sector.

The ministers of education in the 1960s in Israel, Abba Eban (1960-1963) and Zalman Aranne (1955-1960, 1963-1969), interpreted the term "education" in different ways: Eban accepted the need for vocational streams in schools but advocated a broader general education, while Aranne adopted a different approach. He believed that state-subsidized education for weaker populations should focus on vocational training, and comprehensive schools were the correct institution for combining diverse, mostly vocational, streams.¹⁹ Aranne's antipathy to academic (*iyuni*) schools is evident from the following statement he made at a 1963 conference in Dimona, one year before the establishment of the Israel Education Fund:

While I admire *iyuni* schools, I have no doubt, that given the present state's needs, vocational schools should be given priority. I would not like to see the development towns "adopting" the "snobbery" of placing their child in an *iyuni* framework. This "snobbery" has led to thousands of children being forced to these schools by their parents, unable to complete their studies, thus damaging themselves and other children in the same class.²⁰

Nirit Raichel maintains that vocational education for immigrant children was a necessity at the time, even though mistakes were made in its

18 *Ibid.*, 121.

19 Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System*, 286.

20 *Ibid.*, 298. Aranne declared in 1957, "If there were a dictatorship in this country, I would certainly send at least 60% to vocational and agricultural schools and about 40% or a third to academic high schools." Cited in Avner Molcho, "Productivization, Economics and the Transformation of Israeli Education 1948-1965," *Israel Studies* 16. 3 (2011): 3. *Israel Studies* is published in English.

implementation. Vocational training became the means for extending the number of years children attended school and for preventing pupils from dropping out of the school system. The image of vocational training was affected because tradesmen were not highly paid, and the system was seen as a safety net for potential school drop-outs.²¹ In theory, the pupils in the vocation track were supposed to become the backbone and pride of Israel's industry, but the mistakes made and the low self-image of such workers gave the domain of vocational education a negative image.²²

The “tracking” or “spiral system” of streaming mainly children of immigrants from Muslim lands to vocational schools is a debated issue in the historiography of Israeli education due to the social consequences of this educational policy, which was seen as perpetuating ethnic and social gaps and neglecting education's role as a social leveler. Streaming children from seventh grade into vocational schools was viewed as an act that locked them into a future as menial “blue-collar” workers with no hope of improving their work status or attaining a higher education. One claim holds that the streaming system functioned as a type of social selection, resulting in the exclusion of North African Jews from the Jewish national collective.²³ *De facto*, vocational education became almost the sole option for Mizrahi children. Many stereotypes attributing low cognitive intelligence to Mizrahi children were based on the work of Karl Frankenstein, who researched special education and children who were called *teuni tipuach* (literally – in need of nurturing).²⁴

Implementation of the comprehensive school as part of educational reform took place in the 1960s.²⁵ The aim of the comprehensive school

21 Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System*, 107.

22 *Ibid.*, 287. It is interesting that the debate of pros and cons of vocational training still resonates today. Recently, the Knesset debated the issue and government ministers of North African origin were outspoken in their opposition, whilst Prime Minister Netanyahu hailed its advantages.

23 *Ibid.*, 72.

24 *Ibid.*, 79.

25 Miriam Schmida, *From Equality to Excellence: Educational Reform and the Comprehensive School* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University, 1986), esp. 121

model was to create a heterogeneous integration of both academic (i.e., matriculation track) education and vocational training. The idea of a heterogeneous pupil population with academic and vocational streams in a single large school was an innovation.²⁶ For better or for worse, Aranne became known as the “father of comprehensive schools” in the periphery.²⁷

The original goal was to implement the comprehensive school concept nationwide, but these schools became synonymous with development towns.²⁸ The establishment of comprehensive schools was part of a worldwide movement of modernization, which began in the United States in the 1920s and developed in Britain in the 1940s, with a twofold and seeming contradictory aim: to prepare individuals for processes of society and provide individual education to each.²⁹ It was a tool for social mobility.³⁰ Comprehensive schools replaced single-stream schools that were either academic or vocational, and were defined as open educational institutions for everyone. The comprehensive school system emphasized the democratic element, which was a vital premise for US donors, and became the flagship of the Israel Education Fund.

Miriam Schmida, in her study of the comprehensive school, states that heterogeneous integration failed in the periphery because the majority of students in the development towns were of similar (Mizrachi) origin, thereby preventing any real mix between different populations. The comprehensive school became identified exclusively with the development towns, as the major cities did not adopt the model.³¹

The development towns became the “laboratories of the comprehensive

[Hebrew]. See also: Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System*, 112, 120-1.

26 Schmida, *From Equality to Excellence*, 121

27 Zvi Zameret, “Development Towns: Fifty Years of Education,” in *Development Towns*, ed. Zvi Zameret, Aviva Halamish, and Esther Meir-Glitzstein (Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 2009), 298 [Hebrew].

28 Shmueli admitted that the main inspiration came from Great Britain and that he was sent there in order to learn how it worked. See Shmueli, interview.

29 Schmida, *From Equality to Excellence*, 29.

30 *Ibid.*, 39.

31 *Ibid.*

schools in Israel".³² Shmueli was accused of lowering educational standards to allow comprehensive schools to create a common denominator for all students, but eventually they were accepted, in his view, "with great love".³³

Adoption of the comprehensive school model was part of a general change in government thinking in the mid-1960s: "For the first time, secondary education came to be a field of real governmental policy."³⁴ Increasing the number of high school students became a central goal. Avner Molcho maintains that the change was prompted by a new economic approach in the Finance Ministry known as *Investment in Human Capital*, which maintained that education is a salient type of capital that is essential for social mobility. Therefore, the government was obligated to ensure that children from low-income backgrounds received a complete, well-rounded education.³⁵

Historians of the secondary school system in Israel and especially in the periphery all note the change in the 1960s. I contend that the Israel Education Fund was a central factor in this change, although its role in the process has been hitherto virtually ignored. Zvi Zameret, in his study of education in the development towns, notes the meteoric rise in comprehensive schools and the "almost unlimited resources (including resources from private donors)".³⁶ Miriam Schmida is the only researcher who writes of the massive funding by the Israel Education Fund as the key behind the dramatic increase of comprehensive schools in the periphery.³⁷ One explanation for this omission may be the fact that historians underestimated the significance of an organization that engaged primarily in the construction of schools and educational facilities: An in-depth study of the Fund's investments shows that the US Jewish involvement of the Fund went beyond the physical construction

32 Eliezer Shmueli, "Development Towns: Educational Experiential Pioneers in the Education System," *Hed Hahinuch* (2010): 28-9.

33 Shmueli, interview.

34 Molcho, "Productivization," 23.

35 *Ibid.*, 123.

36 Zameret, "Development Towns: 50 Years of Education," 298.

37 Schmida, *From Equality to Excellence*, 168.

of schools and included the incorporation of American democratic values and new educational thinking. This policy could not be implemented without the physical construction of the facilities.

David Ben-Gurion and Initial Attempts to Solve the Issue

Ralph Goldman, the first director general of the Israel Educational Fund (“my job is basically an enabler”),³⁸ maintains that it was David Ben-Gurion who, on the eve of his final retirement, felt the urgency to make a radical educational change.³⁹ In 1963, he told Goldman that he had two dreams for Israel: to change the electoral system and to “revolutionize the country’s secondary education so that every child could receive a free high school education”.⁴⁰ David Ben-Gurion saw education as vital to the future of Israel and “stressed his belief that in 15-20 years it would be possible to give free education up to the age of 20 and to postpone military service (which now starts at 18) until that age”.⁴¹

The problem of education was first in urgency after that of security ... and the utmost effort must be made, both in Israel

38 Tom Shachtman, *I Seek My Brethren: Ralph Goldman and the “Joint”: Rescue, Relief and Reconstruction* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2001), 234.

39 Ben-Gurion Archives (BGA), Correspondence, 6 January 1969, letter from Goldman to Ben-Gurion, in which the former sums the Fund’s achievements in the four years that Goldman headed the Fund: 64 high schools built. Goldman attributes the vision and dream to Ben-Gurion.

40 Ralph Goldman, interview by Esther Suissa, Jerusalem 7 November 2011. See also Raichel, *The Story of the Israeli Education System*, 282, on Ben-Gurion’s speech to the Knesset in 1962: “The State of Israel has to make an aim for itself – to provide all the younger generation, without exception, whether with wealthy or poor parents, from Europe or from Asia and Africa, primary, secondary and higher education.” Raichel notes that this had not yet been accomplished at the time.

41 BGA, “Ben-Gurion Surveys Scientific and Educational Gap,” *Israel Digest* 6 (1963): 1.

and among world Jewry, to meet the educational needs of the new generation, which in the next 20 years would shape the intellectual and moral image of the Israeli nation.⁴²

Ben-Gurion realized that formal education facilities were inadequate and there was a need for a holistic approach:

Equality in the schools ...was only a formal and legal equality. Without suitable home conditions, poor children, especially those belonging to large families would derive little or no benefit from their studies. At this time, the state is not able to maintain free secondary education, therefore it must ensure that poor children should receive scholarships for secondary education, and they should be assisted by instructors in youth clubs to do their homework after school hours are over.

Ben-Gurion placed the responsibility of education on what he considered a natural partnership between Israel and the world Jewry. "He believed it would also be possible to attract to Israel hundreds, thousands and even tens or thousands of talented young Jews from the Diaspora, some of whom would dedicate themselves to education."⁴³

He had already approached United Jewish Appeal (UJA) leaders Meyerhoff, Warburg, Dewey Stone, and Rabbi Herbert Friedman in 1962 during a Fall Study Mission to raise \$500,000 from 100 wealthy individuals for an education fund. In addition, the UJA had addressed the issue in 1958 when a study of higher and secondary education was conducted during its tenth anniversary mission to Israel.⁴⁴ The American Jewish leaders and donors were informed of the situation of education in the development towns and that the only options for new immigrants to study after the age of 14 was either Youth Aliya programs or special

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 Central Zionist Archive (CZA), DD1/8327. Minutes of Sub-Committee, King David Hotel, October 1963. The study was conducted by Abraham Hyman, Oral History Department (128-194). Quoted in Ernest Stock, *Beyond Partnership: The Jewish Agency and the Diaspora, 1959-1971* (New York: Herzl Press, 1992), 105-6.

boarding schools for gifted children in Jerusalem.⁴⁵ All three leaders, Warburg, Stone, and Friedman, told Ben-Gurion that the scheme of an educational fund funded by 100 wealthy donors was unfeasible.⁴⁶

The US Foundation Tradition

To understand the success of a Jewish educational foundation for Israel one must understand the inherent connection between U.S. education and foundations. In the early twentieth century, one-half of all U.S. foundations were involved in education for disadvantaged populations.⁴⁷ These foundations paved the way for public education in the south, particularly after public high schools had become commonplace in most of the United States by 1910. The Peabody Fund (1867), the John Slater Fund (1882), and the Julius Rosenwald Fund (1917) all aimed at improving education for southern African-Americans and training teachers in the area.⁴⁸ By World War II, the aim of a more equitable

45 Stock, *Beyond Partnership*.

46 Stock, *Beyond Partnership*. Ben-Gurion continued to take an interest in the Fund from his home in Sde-Boker and in 1967 travelled to the United States, one of his aims being the creation of a high school in the Ben-Gurion College in Sde-Boker. He succeeded in raising \$1 million for this purpose. See BGA, Diaries, 26 July 1963 and 1 September 1963. See BGA Correspondence, Shavit to Goldman, "Solicitations during Ben-Gurion visit," 17 March 1967. One donor was Guildford Glazer of Los Angeles who later founded the Faculty of Management and Business at Ben-Gurion University. Eliezer Shmueli denied that Ben-Gurion conducted a separate campaign for the Ben-Gurion college high school. See Shmueli, interview. Paula Ben-Gurion also took a personal interest in this particular project. BGA Correspondence, Goldman to Paula Ben-Gurion, 31 December 1967.

47 Pamela Barnhouse Walters and Emily A. Bowman, "Foundations and the Making of Public Education in the United States, 1867-1950," in *American Foundations: Roles and Contributions*, ed. David C. Hammack (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 31-50.

48 Julius Rosenwald came from an illustrious Jewish family involved in communal affairs: his two children chose different directions: William became a leader in the United Jewish Appeal (and involved in the IEF) and Lessing became the head of the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism.

education for African-American students in the South and Hispanics in the Southwest had been achieved. The next stage involved improving the quality of teachers and infrastructures, and supporting libraries and arts education.⁴⁹ Nirit Raichel notes that Israeli educational policy makers learned how to integrate new immigrants into the education system from their US counterparts and their efforts of absorbing immigrants between the two world wars.⁵⁰ It is probably not a coincidence that one of the key figures in the Israel Education Fund was William Rosenwald, son of Julius Rosenwald, who had created a network of secondary schools for disadvantaged African-Americans in southeastern United States. The notion of the Israel Education Fund among prominent US Jewish leaders began in the early 1960s.

Philanthropic Steps Leading to the Establishment of the Israel Education Fund

The beginning of the 1960s marked an opportunity to connect the need to fund educational initiatives in the periphery with an attractive fundraising campaign for American Jewry at a time of decreasing funds. Rabbi Herbert Friedman, chairman of the UJA stated:

One year I decided that the theme had to be concentrated on the development towns ... We had to raise much more money and pour it into the development towns to close the social gap. We're still talking about that gap now, fifteen years later.⁵¹

After the initial idea of an educational fund to be set up jointly by the government and American Jewry, a series of meetings took place of government ministers, US Jewish leaders, and Jewish Agency officials; the protocols reveal the depth of the involvement of the US Jewish

49 *Ibid.*, 53.

50 Raichel, *The Story of the Israel Education System*, 105.

51 "History of the United Jewish Appeal", subdivision of the Oral History Division of the Institute for Contemporary Jewry at Hebrew University in Jerusalem (This will be termed OHD), Rabbi Herbert Friedman, 128,14 (1976), 171.

leaders and the seriousness of the project. The series of meetings in Israel between April and October 1963 eventually formed the basis of the Israel Education Fund.⁵² Participation of high-ranking officials such as Education Minister Zalman Aranne, Finance Minister Pinchas Sapir, Jewish Agency Chairman Moshe Sharett, Joseph Meyerhoff, Max Fisher, Herbert Friedman (all from the UJA), Louis Pincus of the Jewish Agency, Teddy Kollek (the Prime Minister's Office), and Rinott and Shmueli (the Ministry of Education) indicated the high profile status of the issue in question.⁵³ The involvement of so many agencies would, however, eventually complicate the implementation of the Fund's plans.

Teddy Kollek, head of the Prime Minister's Office at the time, presented a paper at this forum on "Priorities in Israel's Education of Tomorrow".⁵⁴ He saw education as a strategic national aim, on a par with security issues. Failure to educate Israel's youth, and especially Israel's immigrant youth, would lead to a disintegrating society:

Israel's present superiority in its area is due to the quality of its people. This could be easily reversed if the youth of Israel are not given the opportunity of an education.⁵⁵

The Ministry of Education was to play a central role in the Fund. Aranne insisted that projects would be approved only by the Ministry of Education, which would submit a list of educational projects and priorities to the UJA.⁵⁶ This dictate was the result of fears that the

52 CZA, DD1/8327, Minutes of the meetings in Jerusalem, October 1963, 18 April 1964, June 1964.

53 CZA, DD1/8327, Protocol of meeting, 31 October 1963.

54 ISA, G5605/6, "Keren Hahinuch". Correspondence between Eli Ginzberg, director of Conservation of Human Resources, and Teddy Kollek, 14 June 1963 on how to promote it [the Fund] amongst Americans, and criticized Kollek's work as "too long, too discursive, too technical and too foreign". Also see BGA, Ben-Gurion's diary entries 26 July 1963 and 1 September 1963, indicating Kollek's central role in the initial stages.

55 ISA, G5605/6 Keren Hahinuch. Teddy Kollek, June 1963. He spoke of a \$50-70 million campaign over 10 years. This would prove to be a modest estimate.

56 *Ibid.*

educational agenda would be controlled by the American donors.

The American leaders from the UJA agreed with the urgency of the need but debated how to market a capital campaign in Jewish communities (and especially in the Federations). They were concerned that “the initial shift of emphasis from immigration to education would cause confusion among the contributors”.⁵⁷ Other voices maintained the need to find a cause with emotional appeal, and “education lacks such an appeal”.⁵⁸ An opposing argument was that “education was in vogue”.⁵⁹

Until the 1960s, the main aim of the fundraising campaign by the UJA was focused on helping to absorb the hundreds of thousands of immigrants to Israel. Donors would give an annual pledge. However, after the euphoria of the 1948 war and the creation of the state, donations decreased rapidly and would only rise dramatically during the Six-Day War. The Israel Education Fund was a success, through which the UJA expanded its donor base, reached new donors, and even those who pledged annually, donated an additional sum for the IEF. In the pre-IEF discussions it was decided that each donor would pledge his/her regular donation and then a minimum of \$100,000 “over and above” donation for a school or kindergarten.⁶⁰ In return, donors would be recognized with plaques displayed in the educational facility.

Central issues that arose in these discussions included questions such as these: Would the projected effort relieve the Israeli government of its responsibility for maintenance? What about a maintenance campaign? And, Would American Jewry help build schools only to find that there were no teachers to staff the schools? Maintenance was a real concern, and Israel government representatives, especially from the Finance Ministry, feared the financial repercussions of the Fund on the national budget.⁶¹ Furthermore, US Jews knew little about the education situation

57 Abraham Hyman, OHD (128-94), 4. The Institute for Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

58 CZA, DD1/8327, Protocol of meetings, “June 1963 Israel Education Fund Campaign.”

59 *Ibid.*

60 OHD, Bert Rabinowitz, 28, 128-144.

61 CZA, DD1/8327, Dr. Yaacov Aron, director general of the Finance Ministry,

in Israel, and UJA leaders expressed anxiety as to how the Fund would effectively operate. One of their conclusions concerned the need to fund the training of unqualified teachers and new immigrant teachers in order to staff these high schools.

Comprehension of the tax issue is essential in order to appreciate its centrality in the establishment of the Israel Education Fund. It was essential for the Fund to receive recognition by the American Internal Revenue Service so that donors would receive tax credits for their donations.⁶² As Irving Bernstein, former executive vice-chairman of the UJA said, “It was a matter of the highest priority on which there could not be any compromise, as contributions from our contributors depend on the inviolate sanctity of their tax integrity.”⁶³ An important stipulation of IRS laws was that charitable donations could not be made to government-funded causes. As Joseph Meyerhoff related in his memoirs, “The IRS said we couldn’t do anything that the Israel government was itself obligated to do.”⁶⁴ Since compulsory education in Israel covered only elementary and junior high school, US philanthropic tax-deductible funds could be directed to high schools, kindergartens, and informal education. The humanitarian aspect of the cause was vital in order to receive tax exemption status. The campaign therefore emphasized education for immigrant children: “Due to a critical shortage of educational facilities above the elementary level which are available to the children of immigrants (my emphasis, ES) in Israel.”⁶⁵

Interestingly, the following eye-opening anonymous argument against the project was voiced at the meeting:

Providing education is traditionally the responsibility of a government and the UJA should not enter that field. If Israel

Minutes, 31 October 1963.

62 For an in-depth discussion on this topic see Stock, *Beyond Partnership*, 78-80.

63 Irving Bernstein, *UJA Memoirs: An Oral Anthology* (Jerusalem: Avraham Hartman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1994). Emphasis added.

64 *Ibid.*

65 ISA, G5605/6, “Keren Hahinuch,” Letter to Adrian DeWind, IRS Commissioner.

wants American Jewry to contribute to education, the government of Israel should itself undertake to secure these funds.⁶⁶

This strong argument did not prompt any discussion at the meeting and remained a lone view, yet it does touch upon a sensitive point: How did the Israeli government, especially at the height of statism (*mamlachtiut*), fail to see a contradiction between its declarations that the state was responsible for the public's needs, and its direct appeal to world Jewry to fund secondary education in Israel's periphery? As Goldman points out, "It should have been a government responsibility but it [the government] couldn't."⁶⁷

A study of the minutes of these meetings reveals the depth of involvement of the US Jewish leadership in this project: This was not an ordinary fundraising campaign but a genuine effort to improve lives, increase immigrants' productivity, and ensure that Israel remain a democratic state. The image of American Jewry signing a blank check in favor of the Zionist state, as many believe was the case in the early years of statehood, was clearly not an accurate representation in the case of the Israel Education Fund.

The 1964 Study Tour

In early 1964, after numerous discussions in the previous year had supported the need for, and the general concept of an educational fund, four educational experts (one Jew and three non-Jews) were sent to Israel to draft an official report and detailed explanation of what was needed and where. Herbert Friedman, CEO of the UJA at the time, realized the importance of "men in the educational field who command universal respect in the United States", since "their findings would be an important factor in gaining acceptance of the campaign by the American Jewish community".⁶⁸ Joseph Meyerhoff confirmed that the tour "gave a

66 CZA, DD1/8327, Protocol of meetings, June 1963, "Israel Education Fund Campaign".

67 Goldman, interview.

68 CZA, DD1/8327, Minutes of meeting, 31 October 1963.

certain amount of legitimacy to the program”.⁶⁹

The members of the study tour in March 1964 were Charles Bensley, former member of the Board of Education of New York City and later president of the IEF (and father-in-law of Rabbi Herbert Friedman); Dr. Harold B. Gores, President of Educational Facilities at the Ford Foundation; Dr. William Jansen, former superintendent of Schools in New York City; and Dr. Howard Wilson, dean of the School of Education on the University of California, Los Angeles, and active in UNESCO and the National Conference of Christians and Jews.⁷⁰ In Israel, they were accompanied by Eliezer Shmueli, who decided what the experts would see and which towns they would visit.⁷¹ Shmueli maintains that he chose development towns that were “on the verge of despair”, such as Or Yehuda, Yehud, Kiryat Gat, and Ashdod.⁷²

The fourteen-page report is an impressive document providing background, statistics, and nine recommendations for the Israeli government.⁷³ The recommendations included the construction of comprehensive, academic, vocational, and nautical high schools; teacher-training programs for secondary schools and the training of non-certificated teachers; scholarships for children of low-income families to attend secondary schools; enrichment programs for “gifted children of Asian-African origin” and free education in boarding schools; pre-kindergarten classes specifically for “three and four year olds of Asia-African origin”; scientific laboratories in the high schools; sports facilities; and the construction of youth centers and libraries in development towns. Each recommendation was of vital importance and no priority given to any specific field.

The study tour members expressed the state’s need to prepare “its

69 OHD, Joseph Meyerhoff (128-33), 29.

70 CZA, S60/470, “Keren Hahinuch”. Charles J. Bensley, Dr. Harold B. Gores, Dr. William Jansen, and Dr. Howard Wilson, “Israel’s Major Needs in Education: A Report by the United Jewish Appeal Education Mission in Israel March 1964,” 9.

71 Shmueli, interview.

72 Eliezer Shmueli, telephone interview by Esther Suissa, 26 December 2013.

73 CZA, S60/470, “Israel’s Major Needs in Education”.

young citizens for full participation in the world of the twentieth century”, and this message was important not only for Jews but for “all human beings who identify themselves with the further development of open, alert, democratic societies”.⁷⁴ The report stated that education was paramount for the economic, cultural, and spiritual development of the country, and compared the immense challenge of absorbing so many new immigrants and students to America’s challenge of absorbing 190 million new students within 16 years.⁷⁵ They applauded the fact that Israel had been able to pass a compulsory education law for children between the ages of 5 and 14.

The greatest weakness of the whole structure lies in the middle layer, in Israel’s system of secondary education, which is neither free nor compulsory. It is here that the most urgent problems exist.⁷⁶

The US educational experts recognized the existence of “two Israels” and the need to bridge the gap between “Jews of Western origin” and Mizrachi Jews. Therefore, the Fund’s target population should be children of Asian-African origin living in development towns.

From their visits to development towns, they were impressed that

Life is difficult at best, and the only effective way to enliven these areas and induce the inhabitants to sink deeper roots is to give their children all the educational advantages available to children in the larger urban centers.

They saw the model of comprehensive schools as best suited to Israel’s needs, “because it allows for mobility within several trends of study ... will attract the widest range of children of different origins and thus serve as a unifying influence in the country and because it is the most economical type of quality schools that has been developed”. Contrary to the education minister’s call for more vocational schools and separate academic schools, the experts recommended, based on

74 *Ibid.*, 2.

75 *Ibid.*, 3.

76 *Ibid.*, 5.

American experience, schools with at least 1,000 students and a balance of vocational and academic studies. “The ratio of vocational to academic school building in the program should go a long way toward meeting this demand”.

Deputy Prime Minister Abba Eban (who had recently been replaced by Zalman Aranne as minister of education) spoke of the threat to Israel’s social cohesion:

Israel’s immense burdens for defense, primary schooling and the support of higher education have made it impossible to open the high schools and vocational secondary schools to all ... a very great proportion of those who do not pursue their education to the high school and university levels are the children of immigrants of Asian and African countries. This is not a marginal issue. Israel’s central interests lie in the balance. Nothing can more effectively promote Israel’s historic purposes than an intense reinforcement of her educational program by the assistance of American Jewry.⁷⁷

The recommendations were accepted by the government. On a practical level, the Jewish Agency for Israel in Jerusalem would be the Fund’s operating agent in Israel. The government gave assurances that the lands on which the schools would be built would be transferred to the ownership of the Jewish Agency for Israel Inc. and would be exempt from taxes. Municipal taxes would be covered by the government. The government also promised supplemental funding if the funds were insufficient to complete the project.

The Government of Israel will aid the project by providing ... the funds required for the maintenance budget, ... for as long as the schools ... exist ... including the salaries of teachers, administrative and maintenance staff ... as private secondary schools operating in Israel are required.

The agreement signed in 1964 between the Israeli government and the UJA clearly spells out the rationale behind the support of US Jewry:

⁷⁷ CZA, DD1/8327, “Daily News Bulletin,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 25 September 1964.

That it is not likely that the people of Israel, will solely from their own resources, be able, within the foreseeable future, to provide the children of needy immigrants with the opportunity of secondary education, that the responsibility for providing secondary education.... is an integral and essential part of the responsibility for the absorption of immigrants in Israel; and that the education of the citizenry of any democracy is essential to the preservation of the democratic institutions of the country.⁷⁸

As described in a later Israel Education Fund publication, "Education is therefore much more than a means to provide equal opportunity for all: it is Israel's national insurance policy and its guarantee of survival."⁷⁹

Birth Pangs of Implementation

The actual implementation of the Fund soon became complex and immersed in bureaucracy. It was clear from the start that with so many agencies involved clashes about the division of authority were inevitable, especially between the government agencies and the Jewish Agency.

The Ministry of Education was a key player in implementation as it decided the criteria and geographical priorities of the facilities. This power gave Zalman Aranne much prestige and political influence.⁸⁰ The centrality of the Ministry's role led to clashes with the Jewish Agency.

Another obstacle in the smooth running of the project was the emergence of another player in the educational field. *Mifal Hapayis*, the National Lottery, also built schools throughout Israel by financing loans to be repaid by the local municipalities.⁸¹ *Mifal Hapayis* provided long-term loans (of up to 30 years) at low interest rates, but they still had to be repaid. Eliezer Shavit, a Jewish Agency official, described

78 CZA, S60/470, "Agreement," 2 April 1965.

79 Leon Levitas, *Israel Education Fund: The Reason Why* (Jerusalem: IEF, 1991). (From a private collection.)

80 Shmueli, interview 2012.

81 CZA, S60/470, Shavit to Pincus, 3 December 1965; Shavit to Goldman, 20 December 1965.

the absurdity of the situation in which local governments competed for funding from the Israel Education Fund in order to avoid assuming loans from *Mifal Hapayis*. The existence of two opposing interests in the field of educational initiatives complicated reality.

The Fund accommodated individual donors who insisted on addressing a specific niche of Israeli education, not necessarily based on the priority list made by the Ministry of Education. Oscar Gruss, from New York, for example, insisted on funding solely religious vocational education and religious schools. The Gruss Fund funded a number of schools, the most famous one perhaps the Gruss High School in Kiryat Gat. The government had to accommodate these special requests.

“Matching” funds was another problematic issue, as there were many cases in which the government could not meet its promise to devote equal sums to the building of educational facilities, due to budgetary constraints. In 1965-1966 alone, the government’s participation in matching funds amounted to 8,391,000 Israeli Lira (the equivalent of \$2,797,000),⁸² while the IEF raised \$4.5 million.⁸³ In that period, the annual budget of the Ministry of Education was 321 million Israeli lira.⁸⁴

The IEF in the Media

As early as October 1965, the *Jerusalem Post Education Supplement* published a statement on the Israel Education Fund, submitted by the Fund’s New York office.⁸⁵ The interesting part of the statement is the reasoning behind the Fund: “Israel is dedicated to the proposition that all men are created with the right of equal access to all that men have learned, made and achieved” and “Education should be the inalienable

82 ISA, G5605.5, “List of schools planned 1965-1966,” 18 November 1964 [Hebrew].

83 See List of Donations, private collection of Leon Levitas.

84 Bank of Israel, *Annual Report*. www.boi.org.il/he/NewsAndPublications/RegularPublications/BankofIsraelAnnualReport (could not find an accessed date) and the Government Year Book 1966.

85 CZA, S60/470, “Statement in Jerusalem Post Education Supplement,” October 1965.

right of every citizen of a modern state.”

In December 1965, the *New York Herald Tribune* published two major articles on Israel’s social problems, entitled “Foreigner Next Door: Israel’s Race Problem” and “Israel’s Oriental Jews – The Education Gap”, which offered frank and detailed descriptions. Ralph Goldman added a memorandum to this article:

From time to time, articles appearing in the American Press and elsewhere help to illuminate the complex social and cultural conditions which lie at the heart of Israel’s educational problems. The two-part article by Richard Chesnoff ... is cogent, informed and instructive. It also confirms our strong conviction – and yours – that widening the base of education in Israel is the most effective answer to the social imbalance described.⁸⁶ (*emphasis in the original*)

The articles posed questions: “What has gone wrong?” “Are there first- and second-class Israelis?”⁸⁷

With compulsory education only to the age of 14, barely half the children of the often large and economically over-burdened Oriental families ever reach high school. Considerably fewer finish.⁸⁸

The conclusion in the article is that investing in education was the answer.

Israel is attacking its communal crisis with the tried traditional Jewish weapon for self-preservation and unity – education. Once again world Jewry will come to Israel’s aid. A \$127.6 million “Israel educational fund” has been established in the US following an on-the-spot survey made in Israel by a commission that included New York’s former superintendent of schools Dr.

86 CZA, S60/470, Richard Chesnoff, “Foreigner Next Door: Israel’s Race Problem” and “Israel’s Oriental Jews – The Education Gap”, *New York Herald Tribune*, 26 December 1965.

87 *Ibid.*

88 *Ibid.*

William Jansen.

The article also detailed how pre-kindergartens for Mizrahi toddlers would help the latter to “be able later to hold their own with their European classmates”.

The Success of the Fund

The idea of providing under-privileged immigrants with secondary education struck a nerve with US Jewish donors and touched their belief in democracy with “education for all” and the Jewish tradition of emphasis on education. Ralph Goldman summed up the key to the Fund’s success: “You could always get money for things if you had a good product, and what better product is there than education for Jews?”⁸⁹

“We weren’t getting across with the story of the Sephardi Jews,” declared Rabbi Herbert Friedman, CEO of the UJA at the time.⁹⁰ Yet the IEF managed to persuade US Jewish donors to build educational projects for North African and Asian Jews in development towns, instead of supporting general absorption programs.

The American side of the IEF, aside from several individual voices, accepted that Israel could not provide education for new immigrants because of the financial burden of the security situation. The US Jewish community involved in the Israel Education Fund accepted the task willingly. It meshed with basic US values and ideals and continued a US foundation tradition of encouraging access to education for disadvantaged populations (in the United States, for African-Americans and Hispanics; and in Israel, for North African Jewish immigrants), ensuring democracy and freedom of the individual. American Jewish philanthropy attempted to mold the State of Israel in its image and the IEF is a visible example of this.⁹¹

89 Goldman, interview.

90 OHD, Friedman, *ibid.*

91 Allon Gal, “Diaspora’s Liberal Nationalism and the Call of the Homeland: the American Jewish Case” (paper presented at the conference “The Call of the Homeland: Diaspora Nationalisms, Past and Present”, University College,

Many donors became personally involved in their project and discovered a part of Israel unknown to overseas visitors during those years. The town of Hazor was adopted by Henry and Edith Everett. They agreed to donate a high school in the town and when they were taken by surprise by the local mayor's question whether the school would be religious or secular, they agreed to double their donation in order to build two schools.⁹² They took a personal interest in the graduates, looked for ways to bring them back to Hazor, and even built a school for Gur Hasidim. According to Shmueli, a strong relationship continued until Henry passed away.

Sol and Betty Steinberg donated four schools in Yahud, Sde-Boker, Kfar Saba, and Netanya: His wife apparently preferred an "educational initiative in Israel" to a gift of a diamond ring offered by her husband.⁹³ Ben-Gurion can be proud of his work: the Israel Education Fund has succeeded in changing the face of education in Israel and creating a new, proud and educated generation in the development towns and the deprived neighborhoods.⁹⁴

Despite the difficulties in establishing and operating the Israel Education Fund, there is no doubt that leaders such as Joseph Meyerhoff, Max Fisher, Elaine Winik, and Oscar Gruss effectively changed the face of Israeli education in the periphery by providing new immigrants with a secondary school education or a pre-kindergarten framework. Despite the general consensus in academic research that social change had not been a feature of government-philanthropic relations in the first three decades of Israel's statehood, these leaders and others triggered social

London, 19 June 2007), quoted in Chaim Waxman, "American Jewish Philanthropy, Direct Giving and the United of the Jewish Community," in *Toward a Renewed Ethic of Jewish Philanthropy*, ed. Yossi Prager and Robert Shirst (Tel-Aviv: Ktav Publishing House and Yeshiva University Press, 2009), 54.

92 Eliezer Shmueli, "In the Footsteps of Donors," *Hed Hahinuch* (2010), 28-9 [Hebrew].

93 *Ibid.*

94 Uri Gordon, "Looking Back with Pride," *Davar*, 2 January 1995 [Hebrew].

change and innovation in the periphery.⁹⁵ They also changed the social and human fabric of many development towns by bringing in teachers from the center of the country, many of whom eventually settled and raised families in those towns.

In the development towns that were too far from cultural centers in the center of Israel, community centers and libraries were the sole sources of cultural and social activities for the population. The IEF began this project in the periphery, where the need for communal involvement and public responsibility was a vital necessity. The aim of the community centers was to develop communities and help shape Israeli society and a just civil society with communal involvement and public responsibility.⁹⁶ The community centers served the entire local population—adults, young children, and youth—throughout the day. Local culture, which was preserved and nurtured through programs at the community centers, and through the availability of books in the new immigrants' own language (Indian or French, for example) at the local library, became a source of pride for residents.⁹⁷

Any future research of the history of Israeli education in general and in the periphery in particular, must include the prolific work of this important foundation. In late 1971, Yigal Allon, then education minister, said that he could not describe the Israeli educational system without the Israel Education Fund.⁹⁸ Yet the Fund is practically unknown to the Israeli public: “This story has never appeared in any publication.”⁹⁹

95 Benny Gidron, *The Philanthropic Foundations' Sector and Funding Organizations in Israel: Characteristics, Functions, Relations with Government and Patterns of Management* (Beer-Sheva: Israel Center for Third Sector Research, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2006), 38 [Hebrew].

96 See the website of the Association of Community Centers in Israel (www.matnasim.org) for a more detailed explanation.

97 Goldman recalls how during the Yom Kippur War, the community centers were opened in the mornings for young children, and washing machines were placed to allow their mothers to wash clothes whilst their children were in an educational framework. See Goldman, interview.

98 Itzhack Greenberg, *Pinchas Sapir: A Political Economic Biography 1949-1975* (Tel-Aviv: Ressler, 2011), esp. 435 [Hebrew].

99 Goldman, interview, Jerusalem, 2012.

Shmueli added that the narrative of the education revolution in the Israeli periphery “has been forgotten by many”.¹⁰⁰

Physical facilities may perhaps not dictate educational policy, but are an essential aspect of the development of education and the implementation of its reform. The construction of dozens of educational facilities in the periphery opened up the possibility for thousands of youth to study in a formal educational framework and, in particular, to study in an academic stream rather than being streamed into an exclusively vocational program. Through the comprehensive high schools in development towns, many were able to complete their matriculation exams, which paved their way to higher education, and opened doors for them to work in the Israeli public sector.

The above study of the Israel Education Fund illustrates the relations between state involvement and philanthropic organizations in education, with the latter essentially replacing the state’s role in providing the basic needs of its citizens, such as housing, health, and education. While the IEF’s priorities were dictated by the Ministry of Education or, in other words, the government, philanthropic organizations such as the UJA took deep interest in the details and location of every physical facility. The donors saw themselves as personally part of the democratization of Israeli society in the periphery and an essential part of the Zionist enterprise. However, their “devotion” was not blind: they insisted on knowing how and when the facilities would be completed, and many donors maintained an ongoing relationship with the towns that housed the projects.

In summary, the effect of these facilities, such as comprehensive schools in Dimona and Kiryat Shmona, was all encompassing: These schools solved the issue of youth who were outside formal frameworks and brought qualified teachers from outside the development towns who became an integral part of public life there. Thus there is much to be learned from the work of the still-active Israel Education Fund, and its repercussions on the history of secondary education in Israel’s periphery.

100 Eliezer Shmueli, “Israel Rogozin,” 31.