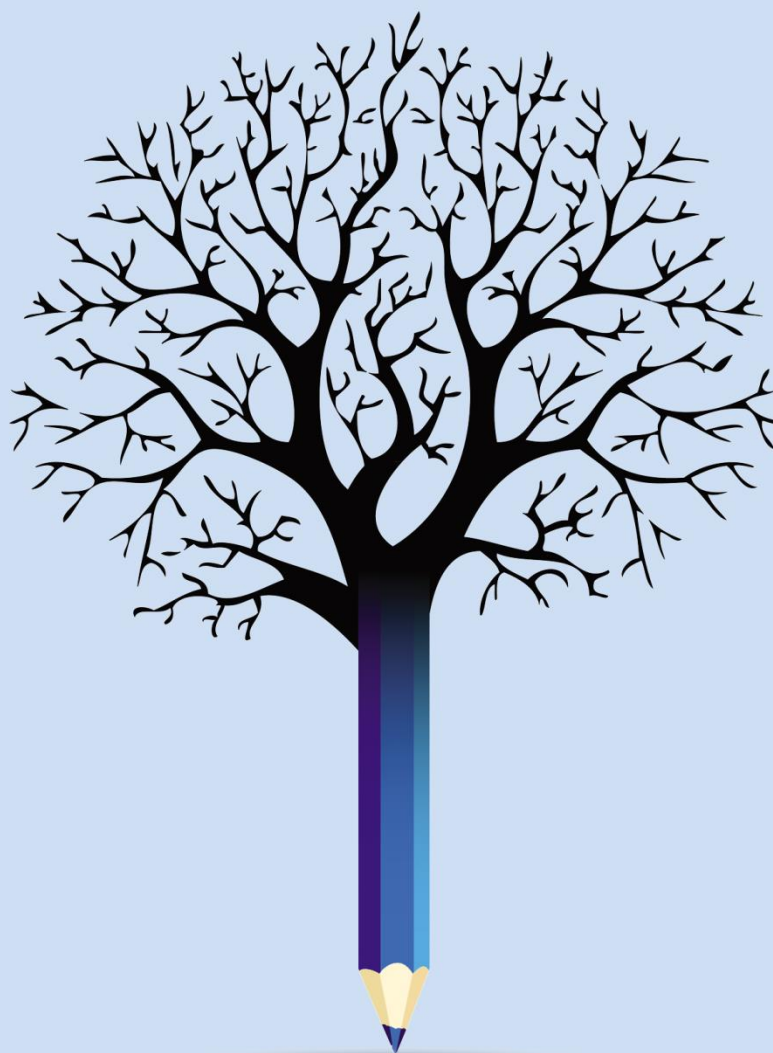




EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK **ISRAEL**



EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

This **policy profile on education** in Israel is part of the *Education Policy Outlook* series, which presents comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the OECD's substantial comparative and sectorial policy knowledge base, the series offers a comparative outlook on education policy by providing analysis of individual countries' educational context, challenges and policies (education policy profiles), analysis of international trends, and insight into policies and reforms on selected topics. In addition to country-specific profiles, the series also includes a recurring publication. The first volume, *Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen*, was released in January, 2015.

Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile reviews the current context and situation of the country's education system and examines its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- **Students:** How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future
- **Institutions:** How to raise quality through 3) school improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment
- **System:** How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

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Sources: This country profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Survey of Adult Skills of the Programme for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the annual publication *Education at a Glance*, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, teachers, school leadership, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, vocational education and training, and tertiary education. Much of this information and documentation can be accessed through the OECD Education GPS at <http://gpseducation.oecd.org>.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the different sources used throughout the country profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and also in the References and further reading section, which lists both OECD and non-OECD sources.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills (www.oecd.org/edu) and its web pages on Education Policy Outlook (www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm).



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HIGHLIGHTS

Students: Israel's performance in PISA 2012 is below the OECD average, but has seen one of the highest improvements among OECD countries in mathematics, reading and science across PISA cycles. The impact of socio-economic background on students' performance in mathematics is slightly higher than the OECD average, while Israel has strong differences in mathematics performance between schools and within schools and across socio-economic groups. Early childhood education and care (ECEC) usually starts at age 3, with the enrolment rate of 3-4 year-olds above the OECD average. ECEC from age 3 and education from age 5 to 17 are compulsory. Israel has a heterogeneous education system. From primary to upper secondary level, students are generally sorted into four main education streams of schools, three for the Hebrew-speaking community (secular, religious and ultra-orthodox) and one for the Arabic-speaking community (Arab, Druze and Bedouin minorities). Ability grouping and school choice are also common among a majority of 15-year-olds. In the context of the economic crisis, unemployment in Israel remains below the OECD average.

Institutions: Autonomy over curriculum and assessment in Israel's schools is around the OECD average, while autonomy over resource allocation is below the OECD average. School principals must have specific training at tertiary level. Pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers must follow a four-year pre-service teacher training programme. Alternatively, university graduates can acquire a teaching certificate in a one-to-two year programme. They must all do a mandatory teaching practicum of at least one year to get a teaching license. Teaching conditions for primary and secondary teachers include above-average class sizes compared to other OECD countries, lower salaries (with some increases since 2000), above-average teaching time in primary education and below-average teaching time at secondary level. A higher proportion of teachers in Israel than the TALIS average consider that the teaching profession is valued in society and would choose to work as teachers if they could decide again. Israel has a well-structured evaluation and assessment framework that uses both internal and external tools. Two central external student assessments are the *Meitzav* (system-level evaluation in Grades 2, 5 and 8) and the *Bagrut* (upper secondary exit and matriculation exam).

System: The education system in Israel is steered by the central government, through the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and local governments. While school autonomy has increased, the Ministry of Education determines education policy, especially in primary and secondary schools, while upper secondary schools are the responsibility of local governments. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP (for all educational levels combined) is above the OECD average, with a higher share of private funding than the OECD average.

Key issues and goals

Israel has large gaps in educational performance among student population sub-groups, with a heterogeneous system and a relatively large dispersion of socio-economic and cultural background of students between schools and within schools. Although they aim to promote cultural diversity and recognise students' needs, tracking, grouping and school choice practices may increase inequities and contribute to social segregation of students if not well-managed. To improve transition to the labour market, Israel needs to expand and strengthen its provision of vocational education and training (VET). It also needs to ensure quality education in a school system that has grown significantly, with changes in the composition of the student population. Facing a lack of qualified teachers in all subjects, Israel needs to attract quality candidates to the profession and further improve teaching conditions. To ensure that all students in Israel have access to quality education, Israel can work further to ensure comprehensive implementation of its evaluation and assessment framework. Israel needs to respond as well to the increase in student population at all levels of education.

Selected policy responses

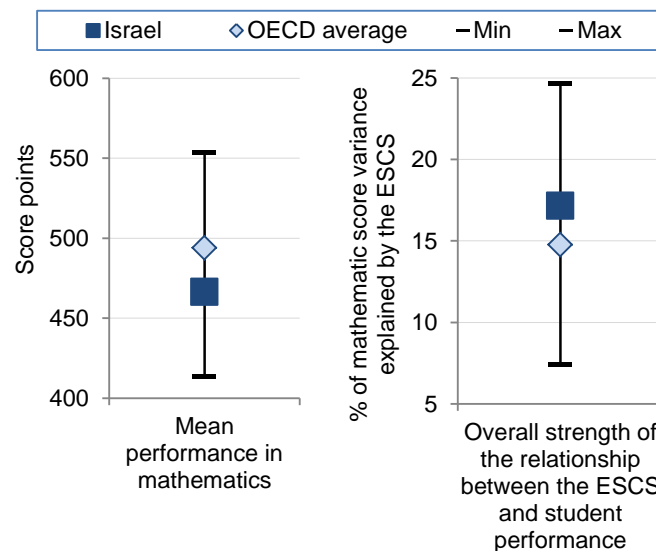
Access to education has been increased by introducing [free early childhood education from age 3 to age 4](#) and by extending compulsory education from age 15 to age 17.

New Horizon (*Ofek Hadash*, 2007, **אופק חדש**) is a national reform of primary and lower secondary education focusing on teaching and teachers. The reform targets teachers' time, professional development, appraisal and registration. In upper-secondary education, Courage to Change (*Oz Latmura*, 2011, **עוז לתמורה**) is a national reform that follows similar objectives, but with an incentive-based reward system for well-performing schools. Both reforms have been promoted by the Ministry of Education in co-operation with teachers' unions.



Israel's performance in PISA 2012 is below the OECD average, with one of the highest improvements among OECD countries in mathematics, reading and science across PISA cycles. In mathematics, Israel has made the largest improvements in student performance among all OECD countries, with an average improvement of more than 4 score points between 2006 and 2012. The impact of students' socio-economic status on mathematics scores (17.2%) increased between 2006 and 2012 and is above the OECD average of 14.8%.

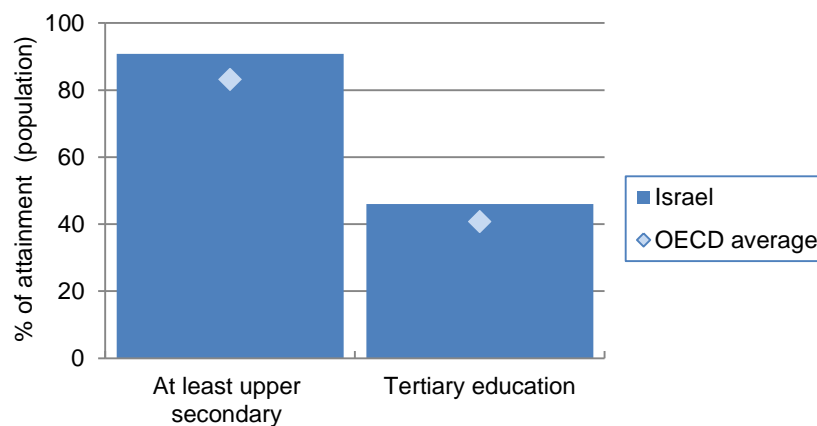
Figure 1. Performance of 15-year-olds in mathematics, relationships between student performance and economic, social and cultural status (ESCS) (PISA, 2012)



Source: OECD (2014), *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014): Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science* PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en>.

Secondary and tertiary education attainment in Israel is higher than the OECD average: 91% of 25-34 year-olds have attained at least secondary education in 2014 (compared to the OECD average of 83%), and 46% have attained tertiary education (compared to the OECD average of 41%) (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Upper secondary and tertiary attainment for 25-34 year-olds, 2014



Source: OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eaq-2015-en>.



EQUITY AND QUALITY: AN EDUCATION SYSTEM ORGANISED BY POPULATION SUB-GROUPS

Equity indicators show improvements for Israel across PISA cycles, with some remaining challenges. Israel had some of the largest improvements in student performance in mathematics, reading and science among OECD countries in PISA 2012, increasing the share of high performers and decreasing the share of low performers. Performance remains below the OECD average overall in PISA 2012. In mathematics, Israel has a below-average share of top performers (9.4% of students are at or above Level 5, compared to the OECD average of 12.6%) and an above-average share of low performers (33.5% of students are below proficiency Level 2, compared to the OECD average of 23.0%) (Figure 3). The impact of socio-economic background on student performance was slightly higher than the OECD average in PISA 2012 (17.2%, compared to the OECD average of 14.8%) (Figure 1). Israel has strong differences in mathematics performance between schools and within schools and across socio-economic groups.

Free access to **early childhood education and care** has been extended to ages 3-4 in Israel and recently became compulsory. Enrolment in early childhood education was universal among 3-4 year-olds in 2012 (well above the OECD average of 74% for 3-year-olds and 88% for 4-year-olds). In 2013, 58.4% of 3-6 year-olds were enrolled in public institutions. ECEC is provided in day-care centres and home-based day-care facilities for 0-3 year-olds, and in nurseries and kindergartens for 3-5 year-olds.

According to *OECD evidence*, some system-level features such as tracking, school choice and ability grouping, while aiming to bridge the gap in students' abilities, may hamper equity if not managed carefully. Education in Israel is compulsory from age 5 to age 17, and is generally provided for free in public institutions. In PISA 2012, only 1.9% of Israeli students reported having repeated a grade, compared to the OECD average of 12.4%. Education in Israel, from primary to upper secondary level, is provided in four main educational streams: two state secular streams (one Hebrew-speaking and one Arabic-speaking), one state religious stream (Hebrew-speaking) and one independent stream (ultra-orthodox-Hebrew-speaking). They all have separate schools, partially separate curriculum (mainly at upper-secondary) and partially separate management (except for the ultra-orthodox stream, which has almost fully independent management, funding and curriculum). In PISA 2012, around 80% of students attend schools that compete for enrolment with at least one other school (compared to the OECD average of 76%). School choice at primary and lower secondary level was introduced in 2014 in 33 municipalities, with some controls to assure equitable enrolment. School choice at upper secondary level depends on the number of schools in each stream available at the local level. According to principals' reports in PISA 2012, 72% of students at age 15 are also grouped by ability within their mathematics classes (compared to the OECD average of 16%).

Large differences in performance and education attainment exist between Jewish-ultra-orthodox and Arab students and their peers in the other streams: 51.3% of 18-year-old Jewish-ultra-orthodox students completed upper secondary education in 2013 (compared to 98.2% in other Hebrew-speaking education streams) and 9.0% obtained the secondary school leaving certificate (matriculation) that allows entry to higher education (compared to 72.2% of those in other Hebrew-speaking education streams). Students in Arabic-speaking schools also have lower educational attainment: in 2013, 82.2% completed upper secondary education and 45.7% obtained the matriculation. Enrolment of Arabic-speaking and Jewish-ultra-orthodox students in higher education is below the national average, although participation has increased in recent years (Jewish-ultra-orthodox enrolment in higher education rose from 34.0% in 2008 to 51.3% in 2013, while Arabic-speaking enrolment rose from 76.8% in 2008 to 82.2% in 2013).

The challenge: Reducing education gaps among the different education streams.

Recent policies and practices

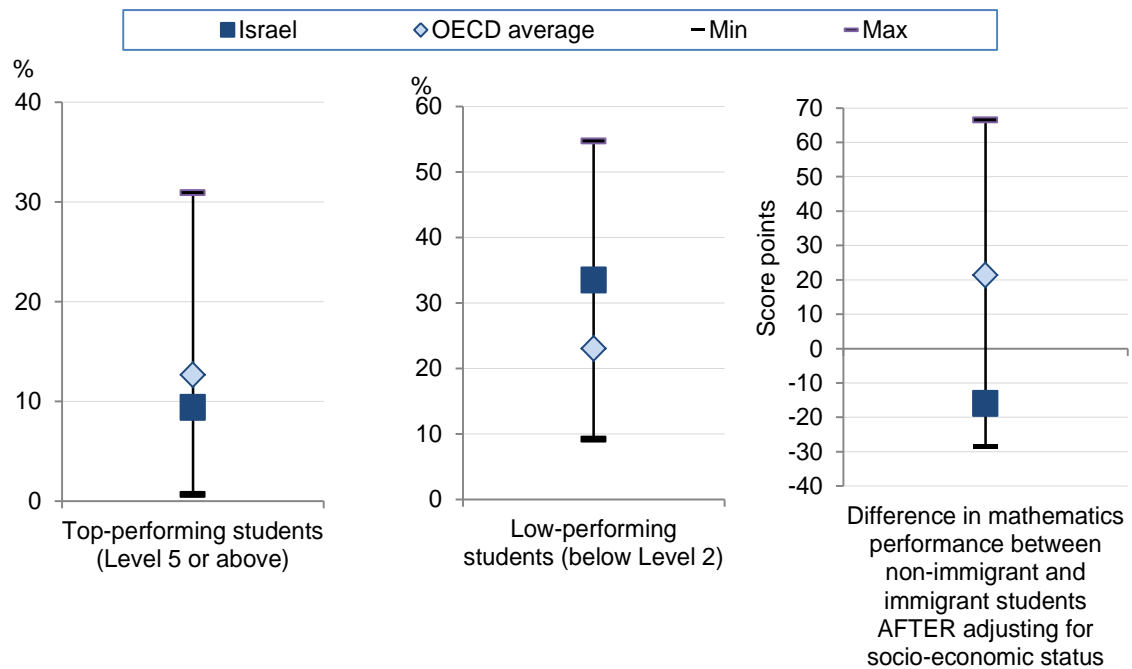
Israel provides *free early childhood education from age 3 to age 4* (2012/13) to ease the cost of living for young parents and allow them to actively participate in the labour market.

To assist lower-performing students and identify them early, additional teaching hours are provided in Grades 3 and 4 in Arabic, mathematics and science.

Programmes were implemented in 2014/15 to support underperforming and disadvantaged students (particularly new immigrants, Arab-speaking minorities and students of low socio-economic status). These included an increase in allocation of special *care hours* for the disadvantaged population in primary and lower secondary school.



Figure 3. Percentage of top and low performers and performance difference in mathematics between non-immigrant and immigrant students, PISA 2012



Source: OECD (2014), *PISA 2012 Results: What Students Know and Can Do* (Volume I, Revised edition, February 2014): *Student Performance in Reading, Mathematics and Science*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264208780-en>.



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: HIGH RETURNS FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION

Labour market perspectives can play an important role in the decision to stay in education. Unemployment rates in Israel are below the OECD average for all levels of education. The share of 15-29 year-olds not in education and not employed (13.8%) is also below the OECD average (Figure 4). Mandatory military service, done by about 50% of 18-21 year-old men and 18-20 year-old women, plays an important role in the transition to the labour market in Israel. There is also an alternative form of civil service which can be carried out on a voluntary basis by those who are exempt from military service. Military conscripts can receive different forms of vocational education and training and practical experience during their military service, which can help their transition to the labour market. The majority of the Arab and Jewish-ultra-orthodox population do not take part in military/civil service.

Upper secondary education is compulsory in Israel, but matriculation examinations at the end of secondary education, which lead to the diploma necessary for admission to tertiary education, are not compulsory. While 91% of 25-34 year-olds attained at least upper secondary education (above the OECD average of 83%) (Figure 2), just 50% obtain the matriculation. The share of students enrolled in upper secondary and VET is similar to the OECD average, with 60% of Israeli students enrolled in general upper secondary education (compared to the OECD average of 54%) and 40% of students enrolled in vocational tracks within regular upper secondary education (compared to the OECD average of 46%).

Vocational education and training in Israel includes more practical courses, and completion of these can fulfil university or college entrance requirements. A limited amount of workplace training and some specialised upper secondary institutions are available. At post-secondary level, VET is also provided through military training, which can include certain qualifications and work experience. There is a well-established qualification system that allows direct entry into the labour market in various professions. However, Israel is facing a wave of retirements that could exacerbate skills shortages. According to [OECD evidence](#), Israel should further develop and expand its VET provision. This expansion needs to be guided by partnerships with industry and underpinned by legislation and adequate funding.

Higher education is provided by 63 higher education institutions (universities, academic colleges and teacher-training colleges). Tertiary attainment in Israel is higher than in other OECD countries. Around 46% of Israeli 25-34 year-olds have attained tertiary education (above the OECD average of 41%) (Figure 2). Israel is the only OECD country where the older age cohort has a similar or higher share of tertiary education attainment compared to the younger cohort, with 47% of Israeli 55-64 year-olds having attained tertiary education (compared to the OECD average of 25%). Tertiary education credentials are rewarded in the labour market. The difference between the employment rates of the population with a tertiary degree and those with below secondary education is 37 percentage points, well above the OECD average difference of 27 percentage points. Tertiary degree holders between 25 and 34 years old also have a higher wage premium compared to upper secondary degree holders and to the OECD average.

The challenge: Facilitating transition to the labour market for all students and improving the coverage and quality of VET.

Recent policies and practices

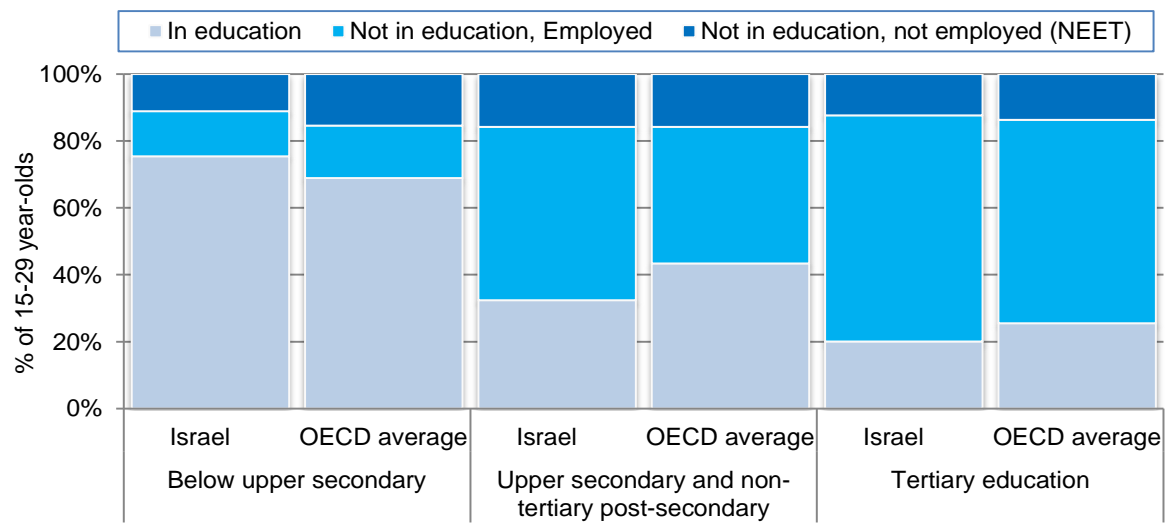
The [Compulsory Education Act Amendment](#) (2007, [חוק חינוך חובה](#)) extended compulsory education from age 15 to age 18, making upper secondary education mandatory.

A project for establishing [One-Stop-Centres](#) (2012, [מרכז תעסוקה והכשרה](#)) aims to increase access to VET and employment in the Arab and Jewish-ultra-orthodox communities. The government has opened 20 centres in towns with a high density of Arab and ultra-orthodox population to attract local population and increase participation in the labour market and in VET.

In addition, "second chance" programmes are being offered to students who did not graduate from upper secondary education to promote completion of the matriculation exams ([Bagrut](#), [בגרות](#)) and diploma. During military service, technological education and training is given to ease transition to the labour market.



Figure 4. Percentage of 15-29 year-olds in education and not in education, by educational attainment and work status, 2014



NEET: Neither Employed, nor in Education and Training.

Source: OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>.



SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: IMPROVING LEADERSHIP AND TEACHING FOR BETTER LEARNING

Raising achievement in Israel's 4 300 schools (not including schools for special education needs) requires developing the conditions for school leaders and teachers to succeed. Overall, more Israeli students reported positive **learning environments** that are conducive to learning than students in other OECD countries. Israeli students also reported positive student-teacher relations, similar to the OECD average (Figure 5).

Israeli **school leaders** are, on average, younger than those in most TALIS countries, and a larger proportion of school leaders reported being satisfied with their job (97.8%, compared to the TALIS average of 95.7%). To become a school leader, eligible applicants must hold a teaching qualification, have teaching experience and have participated in a one-year leadership development programme. In the selection process, applicants' management and leadership experience is taken into account, as well as their vision on the school they apply for. For successful candidates, participation in professional development activities is mandatory.

Teachers feel well prepared for their profession in Israel, while teaching conditions include below-average salaries. In PISA 2012, more school leaders in Israel than in other OECD countries reported that a lack of qualified teachers in all subjects hindered student learning than school leaders. Pre-primary, primary and secondary teachers must follow a four-year pre-service teacher training programme from a teacher-training college, including a mandatory teaching practicum. Upper secondary teachers are required to obtain a degree from a university in their teaching subject. In practice, there are still upper secondary teachers who obtained their degree from a teacher-training college (the number of such teachers varies between subjects). Entrants to the teaching profession have to complete a one-year induction period during which they are assigned a mentor and are part of a peer-group workshop. After successful completion of the induction period, teachers are awarded their teaching license (*Teudat Hora'ah*, תעודת הוראה). In Israel, more teachers than their counterparts in other countries reported completing teacher education or training programmes (93.6%, compared to the TALIS average of 89.8%), and more Israeli teachers reported that they regularly take part in professional development (91.1%, compared to the TALIS average of 88.4%). Among these, more Israeli teachers reported a need to develop their ICT skills for teaching (24.5%, compared to the TALIS average of 18.9).

Teaching conditions in primary and secondary education include above average class sizes. In Israel, the average class size is 27 at primary level (compared to the OECD average of 21) and 28 at lower secondary level (compared to the OECD average of 24). Class sizes are larger in the state Arab-education stream than in other streams. Teachers in primary and secondary education have salaries comparable to those of similarly educated professions. For example, primary education teachers earn 95% of other professions' salaries (compared to the OECD average of 80%), and upper secondary teachers earn 91% (similar to the OECD average). A higher proportion of teachers in Israel consider that the teaching profession is valued in society (33.7%, compared to the TALIS average of 30.9%) and would choose to work as teachers if they could decide again (82.9%, compared to the TALIS average of 77.6%).

The challenge: Expanding the teaching workforce for the increasing number of students.

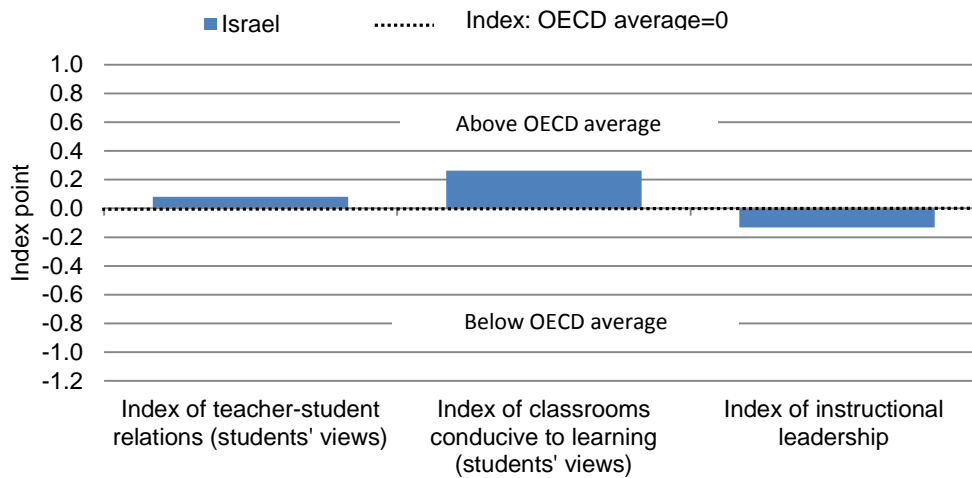
Recent policies and practices

The [Israeli Institute for School Leadership](#) (*Avney Rosha*, 2007, אבני ראשה) was established by the Ministry of Education to improve the professionalism of school leaders. The institute identifies potential candidates to become school principals, develops and runs their preliminary training and follows up with continued development and career-long training. It also researches and develops new tools and knowledge to assist school leaders and maintains an active national school-leadership network.

In its [Five Year Strategy](#) (2012-2017, יעדים רב שנתיים), Israel determines the goals and steps to further develop school leadership. This is supported by the Ministry of Education's [School Leadership Qualification Scheme](#) (2013, התכנית להכשרת מנהלים לבתי הספר).

Some programmes seek to attract university-level graduates into the teaching profession (See Spotlight 1).

The New Horizon programme (*Ofek Hadash*, 2007, 2011, אופק חדש) introduced several reforms for school improvement (See Spotlight 2).

**Figure 5. The learning environment, PISA 2012**

Source: OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.

Spotlight 1: Attracting university graduates to the teaching profession

Israel has about 25 different programmes to attract quality candidates to the education system, particularly to integrate them in the periphery and unprivileged areas. Some programmes have sought to attract university-level graduates into the teaching profession in general, and in science areas in particular. In those programmes, participants receive intensive teacher training (usually with no tuition fees and a monthly allowance) and teach full time, with a commitment to remain in teaching for few years. They receive a normal teacher's salary and sometimes a supplement.

Some examples of programmes to attract individuals to the teaching profession:

- [Outstanding Achievers for Education](#) (2009, מורים מובילים) to attract students with good performance at the tertiary level
- [Teach First Israel](#) (2010, *Hotem0 Teach for Israel*, תוכנית חותם) to promote teaching as an interim career move following graduation from university
- [Educational Pioneer](#) (2009, חלוץ חינוכי) to encourage those already working with youth in other contexts to become teachers
- [Revivim programme](#) (2000, רביבים) to encourage excellent students to become high-school teachers in the domains of bible and Judaism.



EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES: AN EVALUATION SYSTEM WITH MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Israel's **evaluation and assessment framework** uses both internal and external evaluation tools. The [National Authority for Assessment and Evaluation in Education](#) (RAMA), an independent body within the Ministry of Education, is in charge of designing and implementing the national evaluation and assessment framework. There is a great diversity of practices in the different education streams.

System evaluations are focused on key output measures, such as matriculation attainment, national assessment test scores, and upper secondary and tertiary completion rates. The Central Statistics Bureau and the Ministry of Education publish annual statistics and indicators on both performance and finances, at local and national levels. Input measures such as expenditure and class size, but also school climate and pedagogical environment, are taken into account. RAMA (see Governance) is in charge of the assessment system, which consists of annual large-scale standardised tests in primary and lower secondary schools, *Meitzav* (Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools) is used as an accountability system. RAMA is also responsible for evaluating different reforms and projects in the system and is in charge of Israel's participation in international studies such as PISA, PIRLS or TIMSS. Samples of ultra-orthodox schools are not included in these international studies, except for ultra-orthodox girls who participate in PISA.

Schools are assessed through both external inspections and self-evaluations. Students' national assessment test results as well as indicators of school climate and pedagogical environment (collected through questionnaires administered to teachers and students) are used to inform policy makers. Schools appoint assessment administrators to carry out self-evaluation responsibilities and activities. External inspections, carried out by regional inspectors of the Ministry of Education, serve to evaluate school leaders. Schools in the ultra-orthodox-independent stream seem to be inspected less frequently than schools in other education streams. According to a 2009 [OECD study](#), policy makers lack key statistical information on ultra-orthodox education. The study recommends strongly encouraging ultra-orthodox schools to participate in testing of students' abilities and gathering of inputs and outputs.

Teacher appraisal in Israel is conducted by school principals in a process that includes self-evaluation by the teacher, gathering of performance indicators, and classroom observations. Teacher appraisals are not linked to a merit-based career structure and are not validated by an external inspector. In TALIS, a relatively high percentage of Israeli teachers reported being formally appraised at least once a year by the school principal (77.7%, compared to the TALIS average of 66.1%) or by the school management team (67.5%, compared to the TALIS average of 56.6%). The percentage of teachers who reported receiving feedback from their mentor is almost twice the average of TALIS countries (60.8%, compared to 34.5%). At 60.3%, the percentage of teachers who report that feedback has improved their teaching practice is similar to the average of countries participating in TALIS (62.0%).

There is a comprehensive system for **student assessment** against national standards. The current design for student assessments in the National Assessment Framework combines national assessment exams and school-based and teacher-based assessments. Students are assessed by national tests in their native language (Hebrew or Arabic), mathematics and English at Year 5 (*Meitzav*-primary), Year 8 (*Meitzav*-lower secondary) and Years 10-12 (upper-secondary matriculation). In Year 8, students are also assessed in sciences. Matriculation exams in Years 10-12 assess students in various other subjects, such as civics and literature.

The challenge: Consolidating evaluation and assessment practices across the system to address the learning needs of the 21st century.

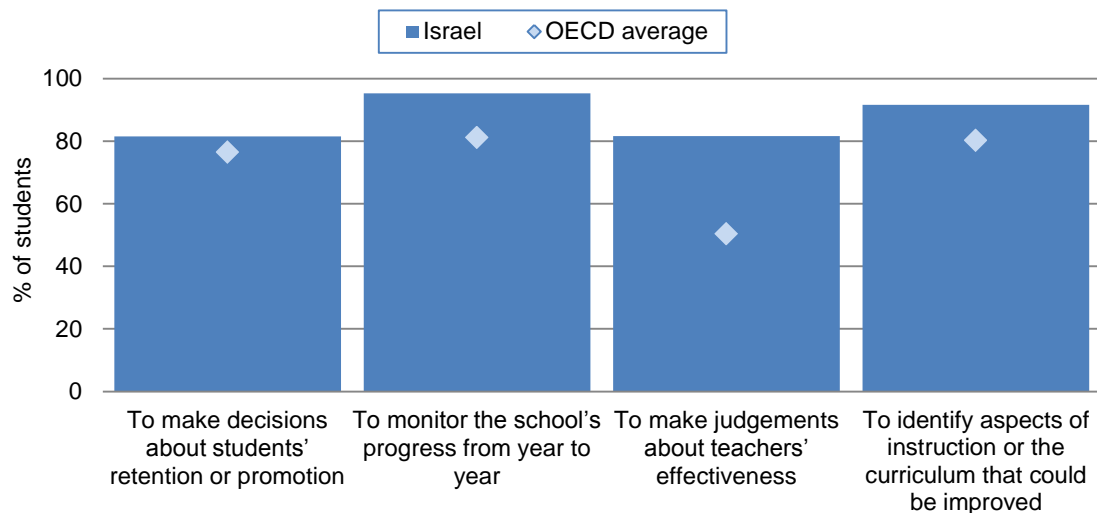
Recent policies and practices

The Ministry of Education has formed a professional committee (2013-14) to redesign external student assessment examinations in primary and lower-secondary schools ([Meitzav exams](#)). The remodeling is considered necessary due to undesired outcomes in the current model, such as an overemphasis by schools and students on *Meitzav* exam results to the detriment of other educational goals.

The [Ofek Hadash](#) (New Horizon, 2007, [אופק חדש](#)) and [Oz Latmura](#) (Courage to Change, 2011, [עוז לתמורה](#)) reforms (see Spotlight 2) introduced new guidelines for appraisal of teachers and school leaders.



Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported the following uses for student assessment, PISA 2012



Source: OECD (2013), *PISA 2012 Results: What Makes Schools Successful (Volume IV): Resources, Policies and Practices*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264201156-en>.

Spotlight 2: Education reforms: New Horizon and Courage to Change

The two reforms, *Ofeq Hadash* (New Horizon, 2007, אופק חדש) and *Oz Latmura* (Courage to Change, 2011, עוז לתמורה) target several areas of teaching and learning:

School improvement

- The teachers' workweek was lengthened in primary and lower secondary schools to allow for work in small groups with underperforming students, in exchange for increased teacher pay (with higher starting salaries, but flatter salary structures). Under this reform, between 2010 and 2011, the salaries of teachers with 15 years of experience increased by 7.9% in primary education and 8.5% in lower secondary education (the second highest increase among OECD countries).
- School leaders' pay also increased substantially, and a pay scale was introduced. In addition, a special teacher training programme for principals was established.

Evaluation and assessment

- New guidelines were introduced for appraisal of teachers and school leaders.
- School self-evaluation was reformed with the introduction of school-based assessment co-ordinators. Their role is to assist schools to establish a culture of assessment for learning as an everyday process. They help schools to define their information needs, establish a variety of instruments to measure student learning and improvement, and interpret data from internal and external assessments. School-based assessment co-ordinators are also responsible for promoting professional development of school teams in measurement and evaluation. They are expected to have teaching experience and a master's degree in measurement and assessment (or a master's degree in another field as long as they have completed an academic specialisation in measurement).

Governance

- To enable schools to better manage their resources in line with their educational priorities, schools were granted increased autonomy over resource allocation, such as hiring teachers, granting tenure and promoting or starting the process to dismiss teachers.

An *evaluation* conducted three years after the inception of *Ofeq Hadash* found that this programme is well implemented in schools and has wide acceptance among teachers and principals, and that the individual hours with students are perceived as effective to foster student improvement. At the same time, teachers reported feeling overstressed, as these hours take place during the school day, and teachers and principals are still reporting inadequate physical conditions and a lack of autonomy.



GOVERNANCE: A CENTRALISED SYSTEM WITH GROWING SCHOOL AUTONOMY

The **education system** in Israel is composed of the *Ministry of Education*, which determines educational policy and is in charge of funding public expenditure on education from kindergarten to upper secondary education. In addition, local authorities sometimes complement part of public expenditure. The state education streams, both Hebrew and Arab, are managed at the ministry level, while the *state-religious* and *ultra-orthodox-independent* education streams have their own sub-administration bodies inside the Ministry of Education. The ultra-orthodox independent stream, while funded by the state, is less supervised by state policies. The *Ministry of Economy and Industry* is also in charge of part of kindergarten for children age 0-3 and vocational education and training. In some cases, VET is provided by the army to new recruits for military purposes. Other bodies that shape education policy are:

- The *National Authority for Assessment and Evaluation in Education*, an independent technical body within the Ministry of Education, is in charge of evaluation and assessment of the education system in Israel.
- The *Examination Department* in the Ministry of Education is in charge of matriculation exams and other VET qualifications. Most other VET examinations and qualifications are administered by the *Pedagogy Department* in the Ministry of Economy and Industry.
- The *Israeli Institute for School Leadership* is in charge of training and professionalisation of school leaders. It also develops new tools and maintains school leaders' networks to assist them in their work.
- The Council for Higher Education (CHE) is a corporation established under the Council for Higher Education Law (1958) as a body responsible for all matters concerning higher education. The main responsibilities of the CHE include granting permits to open and operate higher education institutions (HEIs), accrediting HEIs, quality assurance, and submitting proposals to develop higher education (through the Planning and Budgeting Committee).
- Other stakeholders include unions (e.g. *Teachers' Association*, *Teachers' Organisation*), industry groups (e.g. *Israel Chamber of Commerce*, *Manufacturers Association of Israel*), non-government associations (*National Institute for Testing and Evaluation*) and community groups.

The **central government** takes most education decisions. In 2011, the central level took 50% of all decisions in lower secondary schools (compared to the OECD average of 36%) (Figure 7). The central level makes most planning, structure and resource decisions, including decisions on personnel management. Primary and lower secondary schools (with the exception of a relatively small sector of vocational training schools) are directly administered by the central government, while most upper secondary schools are under the authority of local governments. According to an *OECD study*, this may be due to the objective of ensuring compulsory schooling in primary and lower secondary schools during the early days of statehood.

School autonomy has increased in Israel. School leaders and teachers have more flexibility due to recent reforms (Spotlight 2). At lower secondary level, schools take fewer decisions than in other OECD countries (32%, compared to the OECD average of 41%) (Figure 7). In PISA 2012, Israeli school leaders reported that their schools have around average autonomy over curriculum and assessment. Schools have less autonomy over resource allocation than the OECD average.

Higher education consists of 63 higher education Institutions, which provide academic degrees, and are accredited by the Council for Higher Education. They are all independent legal entities.

The challenge: Ensuring that increased autonomy comes with adequate support to help schools succeed.

Recent policies and practices

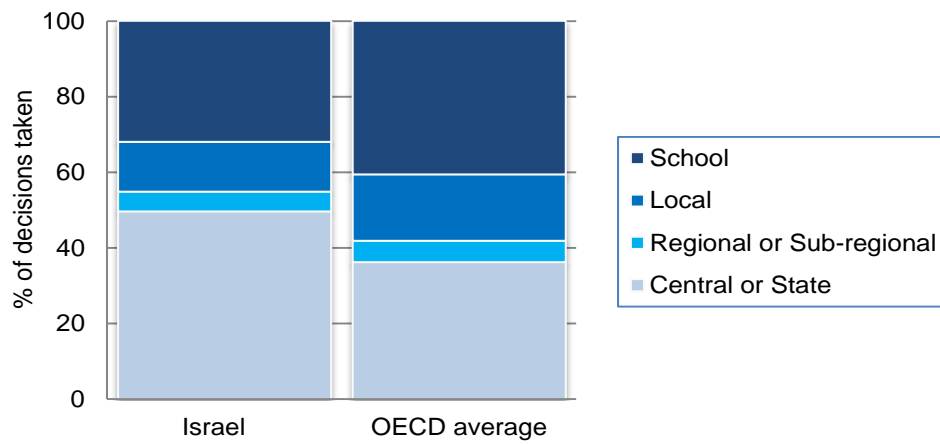
The *Ofek Hadash* (New Horizon, 2007, *אופק חדש*) and *Oz Latmura* (Courage to Change, 2011, *עוז לתמורה*) programmes created more autonomy for schools (see Spotlight 2).

The programme for self-management (*Nihul atzmi*, 2011, *ניהול עצמי*) includes 1 678 primary schools (equivalent to 94% of all schools). This programme aims to grant schools greater autonomy for decision making, for example, in pedagogy or use of resources. Schools also receive some funding from local authorities and the Ministry of Education to use at their discretion, with a possibility to create new programmes and activities.

In the Meaningful Learning Programme (*Lemida Mashmaitit*, 2014, *למידה משמעותית*), 70% of the curriculum was defined as core knowledge, and teachers received autonomy in teaching and student assessment for the remaining 30% of the curriculum. Teachers are expected to use innovative methods of teaching and evaluation for the non-core curriculum. School principals took on responsibility for the quality and subjects of professional development for teachers in their school.



Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken in public lower secondary schools at each level of government (2011)



Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2012-en>.



FUNDING: INCREASED EXPENDITURE PER STUDENT WITH REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL FUNDING

Israel's **investment in education institutions** is higher than the OECD average. Expenditure on education institutions from pre-primary to tertiary levels is 6.7% of GDP (above the OECD average of 5.9%) (Figure 8). This is mainly due to a higher proportion of young people in the population than in other OECD countries. Between 2000 and 2012, Israel increased spending from primary to tertiary level as a proportion of GDP by 0.1 percentage points (below the OECD average increase of 0.4 percentage points). As in most OECD countries, a large portion of expenditure on educational institutions from primary to tertiary education comes from public sources (77.1% in Israel, compared to the OECD average of 83.5% in 2012).

Israel's **annual expenditure per student** is below the 2012 OECD average across the different levels of education. The annual expenditure per student from primary to tertiary education is below average (USD 7 903, compared to the OECD average of USD 10 220). Israel increased its per-student expenditure at primary to post-secondary non-tertiary levels by 38% between 2005 and 2012 (above the OECD average increase of 21%). At tertiary level, per-student expenditure increased by 2% over the same period (compared to the OECD average increase of 11%).

Funding for schools is mostly provided by national and local governments. Funding varies between schools according to the school stream and the local government. The Ministry of Education provides schools with grants for teaching services and infrastructure, as well as support for transport services for school children, with municipalities often providing additional funding. Schools in the Arab education stream tend to be underfunded, as they are often located in less affluent areas. According to [national data](#), more affluent local governments can provide up to 10-20 times higher funding per student for schools than less affluent local governments.

The Israeli Government has primary responsibility for public **funding of higher education institutions**. This funding is largely allocated through planning by the Council for Higher Education and its budgeting sub-committee. Around 47.6% of total expenditure for tertiary education comes from private sources (compared to the 2012 OECD average of 30.3%), and 29.6% comes exclusively from household payments for tuition or other fees for tertiary institutions. Funding for **vocational education and training** comes from multiple sources, such as the Ministries of Education, Economy and Industry, and Security. According to an [OECD study](#), both VET and tertiary education institutions have been affected by decreasing budgets and cutbacks in recent years.

Demographic changes in the past 20 years are significantly affecting the Israeli school network. Israel's school system has expanded dramatically as a result of an increase of 40% in the 5-24 year-old population between 1990 and 2010. There is also a change in the composition of the student population. Much of the increase in the number of primary and secondary school students has been in the Arab-speaking and ultra-orthodox streams. These changes require the Israeli government to ensure that funding is allocated efficiently across the school network and to expand the teaching workforce (See School improvement).

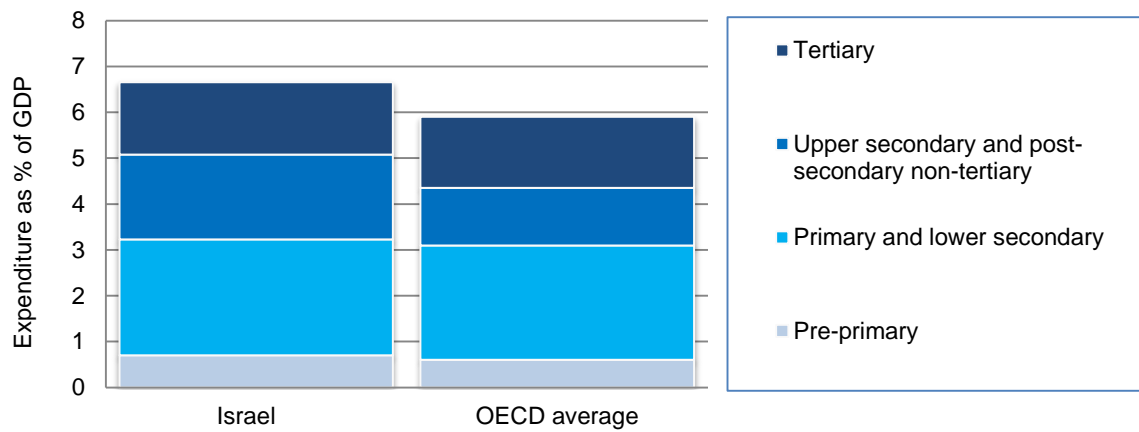
The challenge: Ensuring greater equity in resource allocation across the system in a context of regional disparities in school funding and demographic change.

Recent policies and practices

Several programmes have been implemented to reduce inequalities among the different population minorities at primary and secondary level. For example, in a five-year programme (2007-11) to reduce class size by building 8 000 new classrooms, 3 120 new classrooms were designated for the Arab stream. Also, a five-year plan for the Arab, Druze and Bedouin schools (2008-11) provided additional resources for teaching and infrastructure, as well as for reform to curricula and instruction to Arab and other minorities.



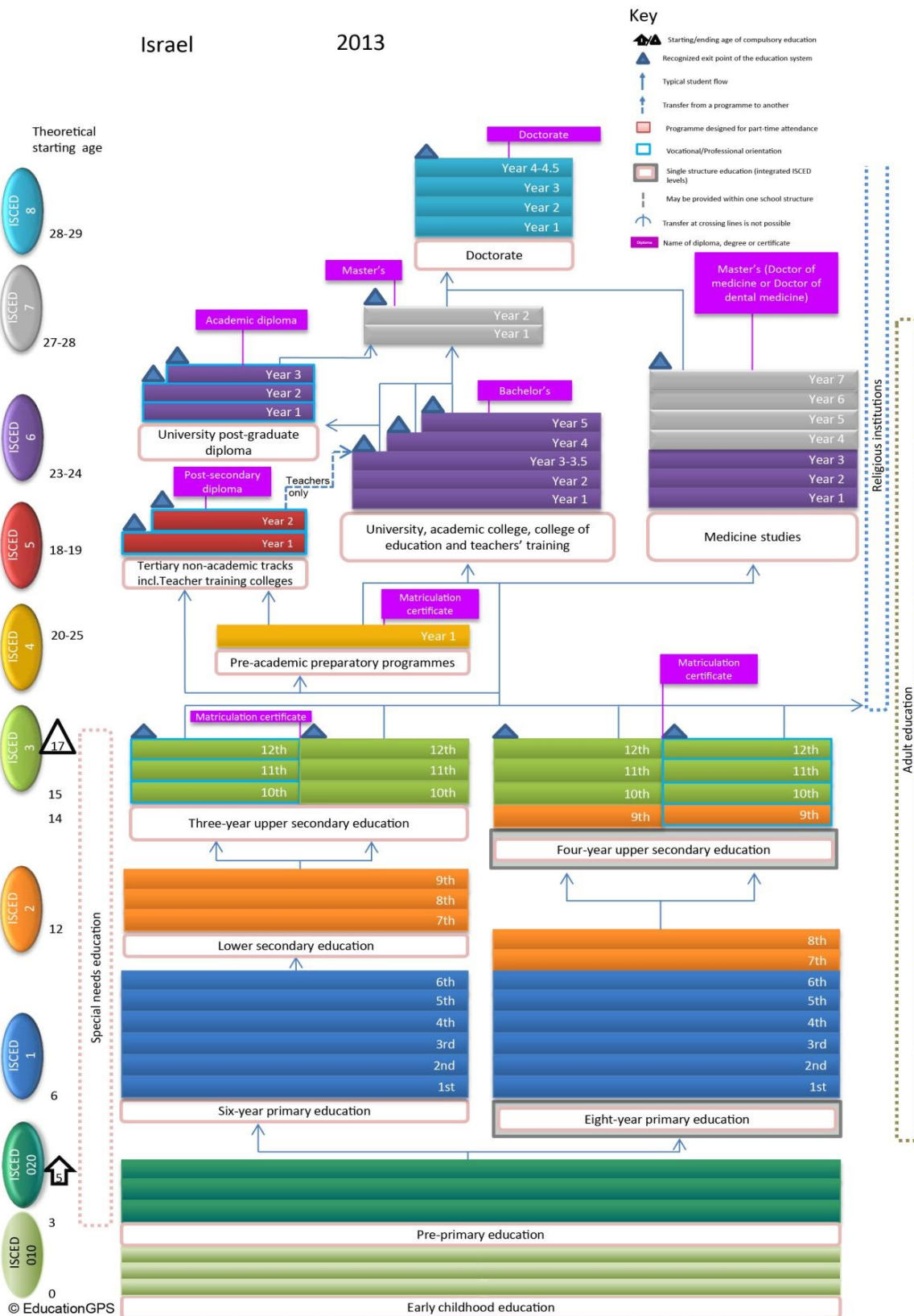
Figure 8. Expenditure on educational institutions as a percentage of GDP, by level of education (2012)



Source: OECD (2015), *Education at a Glance 2015: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2015-en>.



ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF ISRAEL'S EDUCATION SYSTEM



Source: OECD (2012-13), "Israel: Overview of the education system", *OECD Education GPS*, http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/ISR/ISR_2011_EN.pdf.



ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators	Israel	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
Background information					
<i>Political context</i>					
1	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP, 2012 (EAG 2015)	5.2%	4.8%	3.5%	7.7%
<i>Economy</i>					
2	GDP per capita, 2012, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (EAG 2015)	31 296	n/a	16 767	91 754
3	GDP growth 2013 (OECD National Accounts)	3.3%	1.2%	-3.2%	4.3%
<i>Society</i>					
4	Population density, inhab/km ² , 2014 (OECD Statistics)	375.9	142	3.1	507
5	Population aged less than 15 as a percentage of total population, 2010 (OECD Factbook 2014)	28%	18.6%	13.1%	29.6%
6	Foreign-born population as a percentage of total population, 2013 or latest available year (OECD Factbook 2015)	22.6%	n/a	0.3%	43.7%
Education outcomes					
7	Mean performance in mathematics (PISA 2012)	466	494	413	554
8	Annualised change in mathematics performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012) ^{4,5}	4.2	-0.3	-3.3	4.2
9	Annualised change in reading performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012) ^{4,5}	3.7	0.3	-2.8	4.1
10	Annualised change in science performance across PISA assessments (PISA 2012) ^{4,5}	2.8	0.5	-3.1	6.4
11	Enrolment rates of 3-4 year-olds in early childhood education and primary education as a percentage of the population of the same age group, 2013 (EAG 2015)	100%	81%	22%	100%
12	% of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is lower secondary education, 2014 (EAG 2015)	7%	15%	0.4%	33%
13	% of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is at least upper secondary education, 2014 (EAG 2015)	91%	83%	46%	98%
14	% of 25-34 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is tertiary education, 2014 (EAG 2015)	46%	41%	24%	68%
15	% of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is vocational upper-secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, 2014 (EAG 2015)	8%	26%	6%	67%
Unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds by educational attainment, 2014 (EAG 2015)					
16	Below upper secondary	9.7%	19.1%	4.7%	55.9%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	7.8%	10.2%	3.7%	36%
	Tertiary education	5.2%	7.5%	2.9%	32.5%
Students: Raising outcomes					
<i>Policy lever 1: Equity and quality</i>					
17	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2012)	15	14	10	16
Students performing at the highest or lowest levels in mathematics (%), (PISA 2012)					
18	Students performing below Level 2	33.5%	23%	9.1%	54.7%
	Students performing at Level 5 or above	9.4%	12.6%	0.6%	30.9%
Variance in mathematics performance between schools and within schools as a percentage of the OECD average variance in mathematics performance (PISA 2012)					
19	Between-schools percentage of variance	55%	37%	6%	65%
	Within-schools percentage of variance	75%	63%	34%	90%
20	% of students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2012)	1.9%	12.4%	0.0%	36.1%



#	List of key indicators	Israel	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
21	Percentage of variance in mathematics performance in PISA test explained by ESCS (PISA 2012) ⁴	17.2%	14.8%	7.4%	24.6%
22	Score difference in mathematics performance in PISA between non-immigrant and immigrant students AFTER adjusting for socio-economic status (PISA 2012) ⁴	-16	21	-29	66
23	Score differences between boys and girls in mathematics (PISA 2012) ⁴	12	11	-6	25
<i>Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future</i>					
Adjusted mean proficiency in literacy among adults on a scale of 500 (Survey of Adult Skills, 2012)					
24	Among 16-65 year-olds (adjusted)	m	270.7	249.4	293.6
	Among 16-24 year-olds (adjusted)	m	278.0	260.0	297.0
Upper secondary graduation rates in % by programme of orientation, 2013 (EAG 2015)					
25	General programmes	54%	52%	19%	82%
	Pre-vocational/ vocational programmes	37%	46%	4%	93%
First-time graduation rates, by tertiary ISCED level, 2013 (EAG 2015)					
26	Short tertiary (2-3 years), ISCED 5	m	11%	0%	28%
	Bachelor's or equivalent, ISCED 6	42%	36%	9%	61%
	Master's or equivalent, ISCED 7	19%	17%	3%	40%
	Doctorate or equivalent, ISCED 8	1.5%	1.7%	0.2%	3.6%
27	% of 15-29 year-olds not in education, employment or training, 2012 (EAG 2015)	14%	16%	7%	32%
Institutions: Improving schools					
<i>Policy lever 3: School improvement</i>					
28	Mean index of teacher-student relations based on students' reports (PISA 2012)	0.08	0.00	-0.42	0.47
29	Mean index of disciplinary climate based on students' reports (PISA 2012)	0.26	0.00	-0.33	0.67
% of teachers above the age of 50 by education level, 2013 (EAG 2015)					
30	Primary education	21%	31%	16%	57%
	Lower secondary education	28%	34%	17%	63%
	Upper secondary education	35%	38%	26%	73%
Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions by education level, 2013 (EAG 2015)					
31	Primary education	840	772	569	1 129
	Lower secondary education, general programmes	644	694	415	1 129
	Upper secondary education, general programmes	570	643	369	1 129
Ratio of actual teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers similarly educated, 2013 (EAG 2015)					
32	Primary education	0.96	0.78	0.52	0.99
	Lower secondary education, general programmes	0.95	0.80	0.52	1.01
	Upper secondary education, general programmes	0.91	0.82	0.48	1.20
33	Growth rate of teachers' salaries between 2005 and 2013 in lower secondary education, 2013 (EAG 2015)	19%	2%	-32%	31%
34	% of lower secondary education teachers who report a "moderate" or "large" positive change on their knowledge and understanding of their main subject field(s) after they received feedback on their work at their school (TALIS 2013)	54.6%	53.5%	26.7%	86.2%



#	List of key indicators	Israel	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
<i>Policy lever 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes</i>					
35	Percentage of lower secondary education principals who report that they use student performance and student evaluation results (including national/international assessments) to develop the school's educational goals and programmes (TALIS 2013)	94.3%	88.8%	58.5%	99.5%
% of students whose school principals reported that assessments are used for the following purposes (PISA 2012)					
36	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	82%	77%	1%	98%
	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	95%	81%	48%	100%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	82%	50%	14%	88%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	92%	80%	49%	99%
% of lower secondary education teachers reporting appraisal/feedback from the school principal on their work with this frequency (TALIS 2013)					
37	Once every two years or less	22.3%	33.9%	3.2%	88.8%
	Once per year	41.2%	41.5%	9.5%	82.1%
	Twice or more per year	36.5%	24.7%	1.0%	49.6%
Systems: Organising the system					
<i>Policy lever 5: Governance</i>					
% of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2011 (EAG 2012)					
38	Central or state government	50%	36%	0%	87%
	Regional or sub-regional government	5%	6%	0%	36%
	Local government	13%	17%	0%	100%
	School government	32%	41%	5%	86%
<i>Policy lever 6: Funding</i>					
Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2012 (EAG 2015)					
39	Pre-primary education	3 416	8 008	3 416	19 719
	Primary education	6 931	8 247	2 577	20 020
	Secondary education	5 689	9 518	2 904	20 617
	Tertiary education	12 338	15 028	7 779	32 876
Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2012 (EAG 2015)					
40	Public sources	77%	83%	60%	98%
	All private sources	23%	17%	2%	40%
	Index of change in expenditure on educational institutions, public sources, (constant prices, 2005=100)	147	114	75	165
	Index of change in expenditure on educational institutions, all private sources, (constant prices, 2005=100)	243	137	76	538
Notes					
1. The average, total, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in TALIS and the Survey of Adult Skills, where they refer to participating countries.					
2. "m": included when data is not available.					
3. "NP": included if the country is not participating in the study.					
4. Statistically significant values of the indicator are shown in bold (PISA 2012 only)					
5. The annualised change is the average annual change in PISA score points from a country's/economy's earliest participation in PISA to PISA 2012. It is calculated taking into account all of a country's/economy's participation in PISA.					
See www.oecd.org/pisa/keyfindings/pisa-2012-results-overview.pdf .					
6. "n/a": included when the category is not applicable.					



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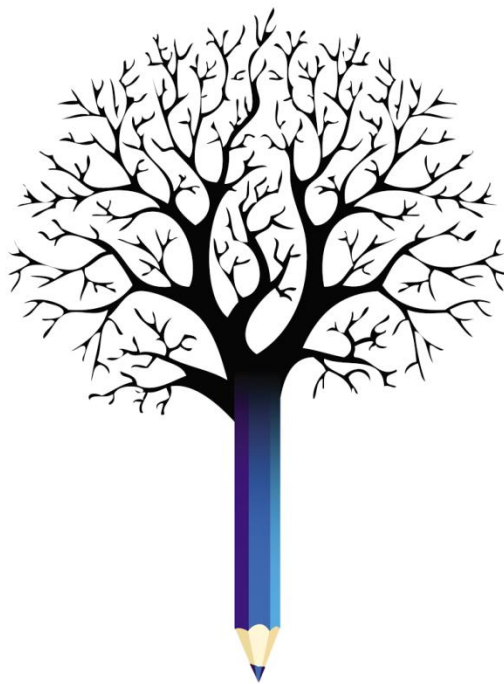
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