

Absorption into Employment of the Ultra-Orthodox and Arab Sectors by Vocational Training

Executive Summary

The purpose of this body of work is to recommend a reform in the Israeli vocational training system amongst the Ultra-Orthodox and Arab populations. It constitutes as an additional phase in the multiyear project undertaken by the Macro Center for Political Economics and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, which included in 2012 a proposal for a general overhaul of the vocational training programs offered in Israel. The core assumption of the entire project is that proper vocational training offers adults the opportunity to integrate in an honorable manner in the labor market, elevates the participants' socio-economic status and better the compliance of the work force and the market's demands.

In previous years, the project came to precise and concrete recommendations regarding the improvement of vocational training, and those provided the structure for the current research. Hereby are a few of those recommendations:

- High-quality vocational training programs achieved by updating the curriculums on a regular basis, recruitment of professional workers as teachers, updating of the equipment and the schools in order to serve both youths and adults.
- Labor market analysis and predictions for future changes.
- On-the-job training and apprenticeships that are financed by all interested parties.
- Advance training and lifelong learning that provide the option to constantly reeving and update the participants' skills.
- National campaign to improve the image of professional training programs, informing the public of the various changes implemented.
- National council for vocational training, promoting the cooperation and coordination between all the various partners.

In order to conduct research on the available options and the necessary ones offered by vocational training in the Ultra-Orthodox and Arab sectors, the Macro Center has retained two top researchers that are familiar with the populations and their needs. Since each sector is fundamentally different and requires tailored approach and solutions – for example, the Ultra-Orthodox sector faces a male-labor problem where as in the Arab sector it is the women who do not predominantly partake in the work force – the position papers presented here were written by two researchers from varying backgrounds and with distinct research methods and styles. As such, the research findings are diverse as are the aspects focused on.

The Vocational Training Market in the Ultra-Orthodox Populace in Israel

In the previous score there have been an abundance of long-term processes that have affected the life-style of the Ultra-Orthodox community in Israel. Only by trying to understand the underlying happenings will these processes be thoroughly comprehended.

The two main catalysts of these processes are the natural growth of the Ultra-Orthodox public, which requires solutions to deal with the new challenges that the sector meets and old challenges that call for a wider-breadth answer; The second is modernization and globalization effects that the Ultra-Orthodox sector can no longer avoid (such as cellular phones and the internet), especially due to the close relationship between the community in Israel to those abroad, a relationship that only grows closer through the years.

The education market is also flourishing, with the opening of tens of academic institutions catering to the Ultra-Orthodox public. Today, it is a foregone conclusion that Ultra-Orthodox men can attain an academic degree or a vocation through training in a framework that suits their worldviews. For women, the solutions have been available for many years and have since developed drastically, whereas for men these are new endeavors. It is important to understand that there is still open and veiled criticism towards these institutions, but most is aimed at the academic path while vocational training is considered a viable option.

The main barriers regarding vocational training are the lack of basic knowledge of the English language mainly amongst males, the political atmosphere in Israel that seems to have factions targeting the Ultra-Orthodox public, as well as that public being divided into groups, each conducting its own efforts independently and not always utilizing the resources available to the entire Israeli population.

The great change-bringer that allows the Ultra-Orthodox sector to obtain a vocation and honorable wages is the financing mechanisms of public foundations. In the last decade the share of Ultra-Orthodox males that are taking part on the labor force has increased dramatically. The change can also be seen in the Ultra-Orthodox media that are now covering subjects that have never been discussed before.

In order to encourage the Ultra-Orthodox public to choose vocational training as a path that will lead to honorable wages to provide for their families, the following principles are recommended:

- Formulating a cohesive media strategy for all partners involved.
- Founding a mechanism that will connect all links in the chains of the communities, the training facilities and employers.
- Publicity activities targeting the Ultra-Orthodox communities highlighting the advantages of vocational training over other career paths.
- Encouraging institutions that are currently offering vocational training programs to generate activities intended for the Ultra-Orthodox sector.
- Gaining the support of prominent Ultra-Orthodox business leaders in Israel, that are considered to have sway over public opinion, to endorse and encourage the field of vocational training.

Reforming the Vocational Training System and Integrating the Arab Population in the Israeli Economy and Labor Market

Reforming the vocational training system of the Arab sector in Israel is an important goal and an essential vehicle in the integration of the Arab population in the Israeli economy and work force. The research was conducted adhering to the approach of formulating operative steps for the advancement and expansion of vocational training, as part of an integrative program that emphasizes the importance of absorption via the professional tool of training in a variety of vocations.

In the framework of the research a review of the Arab population characteristics and current state is presented. The data suggests this sector suffers from exclusion, manifesting as a lack of Arabs in prominent professions

with adequate salaries, while there are some achievements in other areas – an improvement in education measures, government decision to develop Arab cities and promotion of labor issues by the local authorities.

The current state is mainly characterized by:

- Low participation rate of females in the work force, although there has been some increase in recent years – 21.1% (as opposed to 57% among Jewish women). High unemployment rates for both genders.
- Ever-growing income gaps between Jews and Arabs (an average Arab worker earns approximately 60% of what a Jewish one does). In addition, early retirement due to physical restrictions and social structure.
- Below-average education datum, despite constant improvement in human capital, leading to high representation in low-paying low-skilled sectors.
- Discrimination in the labor market, partially due to security concerns. Few and small industrial areas in Arab local authorities.

The recommendations that arose from the research:

Founding a national council for the promotion of vocational training that includes representatives from the Arab sector.

- Subsidizing education programs that are the “engine” in the short, medium and long term; as well as aid in retraining the academically-educated to suit the needs of employers (especially in the high-tech sector – the Tzofen model).
- The government should encourage and support building work centers throughout Israel to raise awareness and diversify employment options.
- Promoting the tourism and agricultural sectors that rely on Arab traditions utilizing modern tools and investment in infrastructure and water resources.
- Specific recommendations for technical vocations, army veterans, the Bedouin and so forth.

