

# THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE NEW REFORM IN ISRAELI EDUCATION AND THE PROFESSIONAL IMAGE OF THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

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*The Education Reform in Israel - Has it contributed to the change in the professional  
the kindergarten teachers?image of*

**Abstract:** The "New Horizon" reform is a systemic reform of kindergartens, elementary schools and junior high schools, which was implemented gradually between the years 2008-2013, in accordance with an agreement signed between the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Union and for the implementation of which the State allocated 5 billion nis.

**Резюме:** Реформата „ Нов хоризонт“ се прилага системно в детските градини, началните училища и прогимназиите. Тя се осъществява системно през годините 2008-2013 в съответствие със споразумение подписано между Министерството на образованието и учителския съюз за изпълнението на което държавата отпуска 5 милиарда шекъл.

The reform is intended to lead to a change in the education system of the State of Israel in order to improve the educational, tutorial, and the learning processes, and to bring about a change in the status of the teacher, in his salary and conditions in return for additional hours of work. It should be noted that there are up to 35 children in kindergartens with only one kindergarten teacher and one assistant.

According to the CEO circular (1), the main reform axes for early childhood implementation includes extending the kindergarten day, adding a second assistant to the kindergartens of 3-4 year old children, changing the scope of the teachers job, organizing the new teaching-learning structure, as well as professional development and partnership relations and teamwork of the educational staff in the kindergarten.

In practice, a large percentage of the kindergarten teachers were disappointed with the reform. They felt that the reform had damaged their conditions, and raised objections to changes that were included in the reform, and demands to reinstate the previous procedures.

Already in 2011, the newspaper "The Marker" (2) reported that extending the school day by half an hour until 14:00 leaves the young children tired and hungry without lunch, changers, shower, or a resting corner.

It was also written that according to the reform, the kindergarten teacher should sit with each of the kindergarten children for at least 15 minutes once a month, and with three small groups every day for about 30 minutes, more than an hour and a half a day devoted to individual work, out of the six hours that she is working in the kindergarten. At the same time, the assistant is supposed to supervise the children, a requirement that is not actually applicable. Furthermore, there are demands to register everything, and this is another burden of work, which indeed cause the kindergarten teachers to follow the activity in the kindergarten, but it is very burdensome.

Following the disappointment with the reform and the teachers' union, the Horticulture Organization (founded in November 2011), which deals with the individual representation of its teachers, has initiated disciplinary and professional proceedings against the Ministry of Education. The organization also deals with the public representation of the rights of kindergarten teachers in core subjects in pre-primary education, and to the Knesset and media activities.

Calcalist newspaper (3) stated that at the beginning of 2018 the Kindergarten Teachers Organization, announced that it was preparing a specific claim in which kindergarten teachers would ask to compare their salaries and working conditions with those of the School teachers. In the framework of the suit, the teachers will ask to cancel the negative changes in their salaries and working conditions as part of the "New Horizon" reform, and to be given the same benefits that the School teachers got following the reform. The kindergarten teachers will also ask to adapt the kindergartens to accommodate young children, and provide resting areas and diaper changing spaces.

Indeed, in February 2019, the organization initiated a law suite that represented 514 kindergarten teachers and gardeners in the public kindergartens, to the Regional Labor Court in Tel Aviv, to significantly improve their employment conditions and to compare them with those achieved by the school teachers in the New Horizon reform. The organization demanded to compare the length of their work hours, to allow a break, to receive a number of "role payers" and to compare the method of calculating wages with that of teachers.

In my study, I examined whether the teachers' professional image changed as a result of the reform. The reason for the study was that the reform had both advantages and disadvantages: On the one hand, the kindergarten teachers' wages rose, they have

developed professionally, and there were kindergartens that received a second assistant. On the other hand, the demands from kindergarten teachers increased, while their salaries, working conditions and social condition (e.g Pension terms) were lowered in comparison with those of the School teachers.

My study addressed the entire population of preschoolers in pre-elementary education in Israel, including State, State-Religious and Education in the Arab sector, to which the rules of the New Horizon apply. For the purpose of passing the questionnaire, about 150 preschool teachers were randomly chosen to express their consent to participate in the research and to rank their positions. All the petitions were women.

The research questionnaire was a closed positions questionnaire, which was tested for reliability and validated by experts. It consisted of 14 closed questions and one open question. The kindergarten teachers' responses were supposed to present their positions regarding their professional status following the Ofek Hadash reform initiation. All the study questionnaires were given to the kindergarten teachers participating in the study in one week, during the summer vacation, and at regular and uniform hours when the researcher was the only one who conducted the interviews.

My research questions related to the relationship between the personal resources, the social contribution and the social rewards received by the kindergarten teachers.

The questions in the questionnaire were : teachers 'rating of their professional status, ranking of their professional status as perceived by their students' parents and the general public, satisfaction ratings of work conditions, such as wages, hours worked in the kindergarten, vacations and benefits, rating other kindergarten teachers in the community , the last question was whether the "New Horizon" reform was successful, and what would they like to add to Ofek's reform?

The findings of the study paint the teachers mainly as women (100%), between the ages of 26-64 (84%), the maximum number of years of seniority is 38 years.

Over 80% of kindergarten teachers are between the ages of 30 and 60, most of them aged 40 and over. Only 10% of the teachers are relatively new, 5% are aged 60 and over. Most of the teachers (84%) have a B.A degree, which is a condition that will be included in the "New Horizon" reform. Without BA, kindergarten teachers had to learn to be included in the reform, since without a bachelor's degree their wages did not rise according to the wages of other teachers.

14% of the subjects had an M.A. Many teachers began their master's degree studies after being included in the reform because one of the conditions for raising wages was to study

courses in well-known universities and colleges. Only 2% of kindergarten teachers have a Ph.D. Most of the kindergarten teachers do not want to study for a doctorate, because the increase in wages (5%) does not justify the large investment until the degree.

When the kindergarten teachers were asked to grade their professional status – the findings table shows that most of them (97%) rated their status mediocre and above.

When the kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the perceived state of their students' parents, the results show that the teachers think that the parents rank them professionally in values that are lower than those that rated themselves.

When teachers were asked to rate their professional status as reflected in the general public, the most common result was a moderate rating.

As for wages, 71% of teachers are satisfied with their salary and defined them as mediocre and above. In contrast, 26% of the teachers rated their satisfaction with their salary low, and only 3% of the teachers rated their satisfaction at a very high grade. 3% of teachers rated their salaries very low.

Regarding their satisfaction with their work hours in kindergarten, most respondents (71%) expressed a very low satisfaction, and only 29% expressed moderate satisfaction.

In the following question respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Ministry of Education's professional track. 70% of the kindergarten teachers are satisfied with their professional track .

The results of the study show that according to the teachers' rating, their professional contribution to preschool age was high (97%), and only 5% rated their contribution as mediocre or higher.

All respondents (100%) think their professional ethics are good to very good.

As to the level of success of the "New Horizon" reform, the answers to the question are inconclusive. The highest rate (41%) was medium and below, 39% moderate and only 19% high.

The last question was an open question. The kindergarten teachers were asked to add everything they wanted to say about the reform. The main drawbacks of this question are: the frustration of veteran teachers with deteriorating pension conditions, the fact that the conversion coefficient in the transition to a "New Horizontal" wage is lower than the teacher conversion coefficient in schools, the unfair ratio between hours of work and wages, the new tasks imposed by the Ministry of Education on teachers following the new agreement, Additional hours set by the system, for school teachers so that they could stay after graduation and prevent the teachers from working at home , which the kindergarten teachers did not receive. It is very noticeable that all the teachers wrote that they want to

reduce the number of the children in kindergarten and return to a school day of five and a half hours, because the little children get very tired after six hours and there are children who fall asleep in their chair.

The findings of the study show that the status of kindergarten teachers in Israel, seven years after the reform, is perceived by them as good, although they feel that their working conditions are less favorable than before the reform.

. The teachers ranked their professional status as a good class and believed that their status as perceived by the students' parents was good. The teachers rated their status as perceived by the general public as a low class. And in fact teachers seem to believe that the general public values them less than the students' parents.

When examining the working conditions of kindergarten teachers as part of the factors influencing the status of the preschool teacher, we examined several aspects, the first being the issue of wages Teachers' satisfaction with the New Horizon reform was moderate, although wages rose compared to the period prior to the reform, but not according to additional hours of work and policy. In this chapter there was a difference in satisfaction between the veteran teachers and the news, as the news entered the education system under working conditions according to the reform of relatively high starting wages, and were not exposed to the conditions that preceded the reform

As for working hours, teachers expressed low satisfaction, mainly because their wages did not increase according to the addition of work hours and tasks. As for conditions related to other working conditions (vacations, benefits, continuing), teachers expressed high satisfaction.

In fact, when one examines the general satisfaction with employment conditions in the education system, the level of satisfaction of teachers is moderate.

When we look at the grading of kindergarten teachers according to professional indices, overall satisfaction is good. Kindergarten teachers feel they have good pedagogical abilities and have academic freedom in their work. They are independent and responsible for their work.

The study also shows that kindergarten teachers are satisfied with their professional progress, although there is a problem with the reform that dictates to kindergarten teachers

what courses to study and does not always grant them the right to vote. Teachers feel they are contributing to their students professionally.

With regard to the degree of success of the reform, most of the kindergarten teachers wrote that they feel that the reform has not succeeded, and this stems from the daily conditions in the kindergarten. For example: There are too much children in the kindergarten, the extension of the school day is not suitable for the little children who fall asleep on the chairs at the end of the day , and because of excessive pedagogic demands from the supervision that prevent the kindergarten teacher from autonomy and contribute to feelings of loneliness.

In conclusion, it can be said that most of the changes in the "New Horizon" reform in terms of employment were not welcomed by the kindergarten teachers, and therefore it is possible that the reform did not contribute to a significant increase in professional image, despite the increase in wages.

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