



State Comptroller and Ombudsman
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Ministry of Education

Management and Supervision of Education for Ultra- Orthodox

Abstract

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Background

Ultra-Orthodox students constitute approximately 30% of the students in the Hebrew education system in Israel, and their proportion is steadily growing. Unlike state education, the vast majority of ultra-Orthodox educational institutions are privately owned by non-profit associations (hereinafter - Ownerships) which employ the teaching staff. There are separate educational institutions for different ultra-Orthodox groups as well as separate schools for each gender. The budgeting of ultra-Orthodox educational institutions varies according to the type of Ownership and the proportion of core curriculum taught¹. In 2014, the Ministry of Education established the ultra-Orthodox District (the District), to conduct separate supervision adapted to ultra-Orthodox education.

Key figures

446,000

Ultra-Orthodox students attended some 6,600 educational institutions in 2018-2019. The institutions were operated by more than 1,000 Ownerships

29.7%

of Hebrew primary school students studied in 2017-2018 under ultra-Orthodox auspices. In 2023-2022, their proportion is expected to increase to 31%

NIS 4.4 billion

Ministry of Education budget in the year 2017-2018 for ultra-Orthodox primary and secondary education. The total budget of the Ministry for the year 2017-2018 - approx. NIS 50 billion

84% of the boys

in the ultra-Orthodox secondary educational institutions have studied in institutions that do not teach any part of the core curriculum. 56% of the boys in the ultra-Orthodox primary educational institutions studied only part of the core curriculum

13% of the boys and **21%** of the girls

who attended 12th grade in 2016-2017 in the ultra-Orthodox institutions that offer matriculation exams attained a matriculation certificate

¹ Core curriculum - literally meaning "Fundamental Studies in State Education". Core (fundamental) subjects are the compulsory subjects set by the Ministry of Education, which are a common, binding basis for all educational institutions.

60% of the girls

in Ultra-Orthodox schools continue to study in teaching seminars, after passing the Szold tests - tests that replace some of the matriculation exams

40%

of the ultra-Orthodox textbooks approved by the Ministry of Education are old books, only partially suitable to the current curriculum

76%

The proportion of students in the ultra-Orthodox district being taught by teachers about whom the Ministry of Education does not have full information





Audit Actions







In March - August 2019, the State Comptroller's Office examined aspects of ultra-Orthodox education and its supervision. These subjects were examined: situation with regard to the academic goals and achievements of ultra-Orthodox students; teaching staff in the ultra-Orthodox sector - data available to the Ministry of Education, employment, training and seminars; textbooks in the ultra-Orthodox sector in the core subjects; extent of core subjects studied in ultra-Orthodox primary education; overall supervision and control of ultra-Orthodox primary schools; supervision and control of ultra-Orthodox primary schools in "exempt" status - that teach core curriculum at a proportion of 55% ("exempt" institutions); and administrative and financial supervision of Ownerships and educational institutions.

The Situation Reflected in the Audit Findings



-  The Meitzav exams (measures school efficiency and advancement), the purpose of which is to provide objective pedagogical information for identifying problems and failures and for improving the teaching in schools, are only administered in a small proportion of the ultra-Orthodox schools and in those that have them, they are only administered partially. In practice, the achievements of the students in the ultra-Orthodox institutions who participate in the Meitzav exams in the mathematics and Hebrew subjects, fall short of the national achievements.
-  The Ministry of Education has not set goals in the Meitzav exams for the ultra-Orthodox sector, and the goals it has set for the ultra-Orthodox sector regarding eligibility for matriculation are low compared to the nation-wide eligibility goals.
-  Most of the ultra-Orthodox educational institutions do not send information to the Ministry of Education regarding their teaching staff, so the Ministry does not have full data on teachers in the ultra-Orthodox sector, which impairs its management and supervision capabilities.
-  There is a severe shortage of ultra-Orthodox male teachers for the core subjects. In the educational institutions for boys, some who do not have a teaching certificate also teach. Few ultra-Orthodox teachers participate in the seminars conducted by the Ministry of Education.






-  There is a shortage of updated textbooks approved and adapted for the ultra-Orthodox sector. Ultra-Orthodox schools use unapproved textbooks, and the Ministry of Education has no organized information on the subject.
-  According to the Ministry of Education Director General circular, the full extent of core curriculum set for the ultra-Orthodox schools is smaller than required in the other education groups. The examination of the core curriculum conducted by the Ministry of Education does not relate to the study hours required for each subject.
-  The Ministry of Education does not supervise the “exempt” institutions, which are budgeted for about NIS 250 million a year, in an optimal manner.
-  The Ministry of Education’s supervision, control and enforcement vis a vis the Ownerships and the way in which they utilize the budget given to them are very limited. Some cases have been found where Ownerships have tampered with their employees’ wages.



The establishment of the ultra-Orthodox district and the ultra-Orthodox state education group and their activities are bringing the ultra-Orthodox education closer to pedagogical goals. However, the gaps between ultra-Orthodox education and that of other groups are still very large.

Steps undertaken as part of the improvement processes - In 2019, the Administration began implementing multidisciplinary controls in ultra-Orthodox primary schools, but they are still partial and limited. In addition, the Ministry of Education has established in recent years six regional centers for the development of teaching staff (Pisga) that hold training courses for ultra-Orthodox teachers.

Main Audit Recommendations

-  It is appropriate that the Ministry of Education set goals for the ultra-Orthodox sector and work to achieve them. It is also appropriate for it to consider ways of expanding the number of schools participating in the Meitzav and matriculation exams and working to increase the proportion of those taking the matriculation exams and the proportion of those eligible for a matriculation certificate.
-  It is appropriate for the Ministry of Education to regulate the employment of teaching staff in the ultra-Orthodox sector in terms of the necessary requirements that must be met, including their training and reporting about them. It is also appropriate for it to work with the Ownerships to receive information on the entire teaching staff to create a basic database that will allow the identification of gaps and needs.
-  It is appropriate for the Ministry to take steps to increase the number of talented teachers to teach core subjects and to work in collaboration with the ultra-Orthodox training institutions, to adapt the curricula to the requirements.



The ministry must also ensure that the textbooks adapted for the ultra-Orthodox are up-to-date, work to increase the use of approved textbooks and explore ways to encourage their participation in the book-lending program. It is appropriate for the Ministry of Education to review the fundamental program set in 2011 regarding core studies in the face of the changing reality.

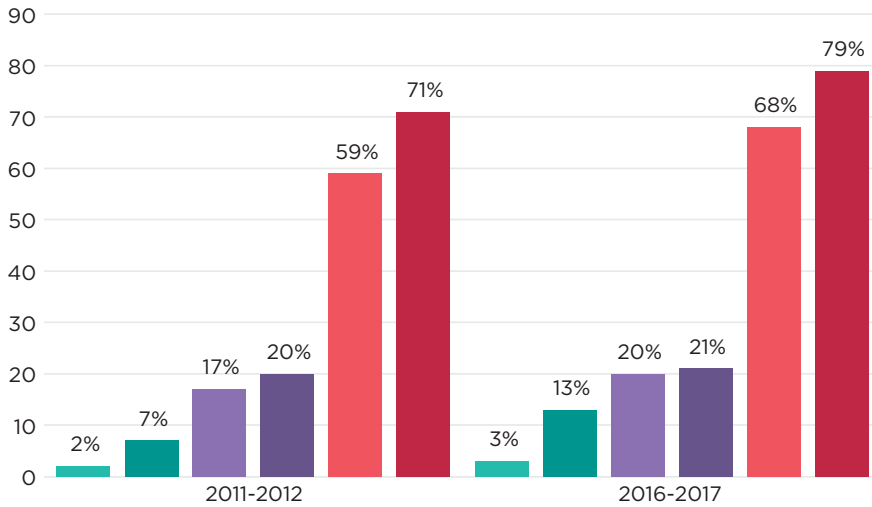








The Ministry of Education must regulate the control format in regard to the “exemption” institutions. It is appropriate for it to work to increase the effectiveness of the control and enforcement mechanisms and to examine the setting of additional enforcement measures against Ownerships that violate workers’ employment conditions.

Summary

In addition to the willingness of maintaining the cultural uniqueness of education in the ultra-Orthodox sector, providing peaceful independence for this group, but also providing state budgets, it is important to maintain a system of supervisory and enforcement requirements. Through the latter it should be ensured that the ultra-Orthodox education systems adhere to the rules set by the Ministry of Education and provide students with skills and knowledge that will enable them to earn a living in the future in a way that is appropriate to their skills. This is even more important in light of the forecast of growth in the ultra-Orthodox sector and the need for its proper integration into the national economy.

The proportion of those eligible for matriculation certificate, by gender, sectors and educational institutions; 2012-2011 and 2017-2016



-  The proportion of ultra-Orthodox boys eligible for a matriculation certificate from all ultra-Orthodox male students in the yearbook
-  The proportion of ultra-Orthodox boys eligible for a matriculation certificate from all the male students in the ultra-Orthodox institutions that offer matriculation exams
-  The proportion of ultra-Orthodox girls eligible for a matriculation certificate from all ultra-Orthodox female students in the yearbook
-  The proportion of ultra-Orthodox girls eligible for a matriculation certificate from all the female students in the ultra-Orthodox institutions that offer matriculation exams
-  The proportion of those eligible for a matriculation certificate from all the 12th grade students in institutions that offer matriculation exams in Israel
-  The proportion of those eligible for a matriculation certificate from all the students in institutions that offer matriculation exams in the non-ultra-Orthodox Jewish sector

Source: Ministry of Health's data, processed by the State Comptroller's Office.

