

# **INFORMAL EDUCATION IN EAST JERUSALEM – STUDY OF NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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1] Rahaf El Sa'ad participated in gathering data for the study.

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

[Government Decision 3790](#) for “Reduction of Socio-Economic Gaps and Economic Development in East Jerusalem,” from May 13, 2018, provides for socio-economic investment in East Jerusalem with a budget of approximately 2.1 billion NIS over the course of five years. The Decision includes six main areas of activity – primary, secondary and higher education; economy and employment; transportation; improvement of services and quality of life for residents (infrastructure for leisure activities and water and sewage infrastructure); health; and land registration ([Ir Amim 2019, Second Quarter](#)).

The amount allocated for informal education in the Government Decision is approximately 206 million NIS over the course of the five-year plan, and it constitutes almost one-half of the overall sum designated for investment in the area of education in the Government Decision. The investment in the informal education field is divided among diverse targets – enrichment programs in the schools both during the course of the school day and after-school hours, youth organizations, learning centers, lessons, etc.

This report was written in the wake of a study that focused on the programs and budgetary allocations transferred for purposes of informal education in East Jerusalem pursuant to the education chapter of Decision 3790, its central objective to examine the needs of the East Jerusalem population in the area of informal education, and whether they are being addressed as part of the implementation of the Government Decision.

The questions in the study were addressed to various entities involved in informal education, such as principals, parents’ committees, directors of communities as part of the community centers, counselors and more. The questions focused on the programs run – if they accommodated and operated in a manner that meets the needs of the population, as found on the ground, and if they address these needs well and sufficiently.

The study used the qualitative approach for data gathering and analysis, during the course of which 26 in-depth structured interviews were conducted with various entities, as described below. The interviews were carried out by the chief researcher, Dr. Samira Alayan, with two research assistants, Ms. Shada Kashkoush and Ms. Rahaf El Sa’ad, while being scrupulous regarding a coordinated and standard procedure for the interviews in order to ensure trustworthiness among the interviewees.

**The interviewees and the questions encompassed East Jerusalem from the north – Kufar Akab, to the south – the Beit Zefafa neighborhood.** All of the interviewees received an explanation regarding the objective of the study and the organization that commissioned it. All of the participants expressed their agreement to participate in the study, asserted that they had nothing to hide, and that it was important to them to present the reality as it exists.

**The interviewees included 12 principals of schools in various areas of East Jerusalem:** five elementary schools, five junior and senior high schools (7th -12th grades together) and two special education schools for all ages. Ten of the schools are official schools and two are unofficial but recognized schools. Four of the schools are for boys only, three are for girls only, and five are for boys and girls together. Seven of the schools are schools that use the Palestinian matriculation curriculum ("Tawgihi"), three of the schools use the Israeli matriculation curriculum ("Bagrut"), and two of the schools for boys and girls together use both the Palestinian and the Israeli matriculation curricula.

For the purposes of obtaining a more representative and inclusive picture, **two additional interviews** were held: **one interview with a senior official in the Ministry of Education and an additional interview with a senior official in the Jerusalem Municipality.** Both of them are involved with informal education.

**The study also included interviews with six directors of community centers<sup>2</sup>** in six East Jerusalem neighborhoods. Interviews with the community center directors exposed us to their activities and their involvement with informal education in the various neighborhoods.

We also conducted **in-depth interviews with six heads of parents' committees** in East Jerusalem, which reflected additional points of view regarding what is happening in informal education in East Jerusalem and completed the picture.

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2] In East Jerusalem there are eight community centers, with one of the centers in the El-Issawiyeh neighborhood non-operational since a fire some time ago. In spite of our use of the term "community center" in the present study, it is important to clarify that the results of the study demonstrated that the use of this term (in Arabic, المركز الجماهيري) exists in Arabic only in formal conversation with representatives from the authorities (e.g. in correspondences between directors of the community centers and representatives of various government ministries). On the other hand, in every-day conversation and in the manner in which the community centers present themselves to the residents of East Jerusalem, there is no use of this term, rather other words are used to refer to the same body. Thus, community center directors who were interviewed used the following terms to refer to the body of which they serve as directors: the "administrative council" (المجلس الإداري), the "neighborhood club" (النادي الأهلي), and the others referred to it as the "center" (المركز).

## II. RESULTS OF THE STUDY

### 1. The Manner of Decision-Making regarding the Content of Informal Education

Most of the participants (24 out of 26) noted that they were not familiar with Government Decision 3790 by name, nor had they ever heard it. These participants were apparently familiar with the plan as the five-year plan for Arab education and they 'feel' the flow of budgetary allocations for this area to East Jerusalem. Most of the principals who participated in the study (11, 92%) said that they are not well-acquainted with Government Decision 3790, but that they are generally familiar with the five-year plan as part of their work. One principal (8%) noted that he attended an orientation held by the Education Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality, during the course of which he heard about the plan, but the explanation he received was about the general five-year plan and not specifically about Government Decision 3790.

The sense of the interviewees was that the Ministry of Education is providing programs and budgets, but was not including them in decision-making processes regarding content and that they were not partners in decision-making regarding the informal education programs.

We found that at this stage, the parents have only general and superficial knowledge of the programs. Most of the parents' committee representatives (4, 66.6%) noted that they do not know who the involved entities are, with the exception of the school principals.

*"I feel that we, as the parents' committee, are almost completely uninvolved in the entire subject of informal education. Often what we know is what we hear from our children regarding the programs. We have no involvement at all,"* according to one of the parents' committee chairs.

### 2. The Manner of Choosing the Programs

Most of the participants in the study did not succeed in answering the question as to why certain schools receive many programs and others do not, how is this carried out, and what considerations are taken into account.

According to all of the principals (12, 100%), the supervisor of informal education decides what each school receives and which programs are approved.

According to the senior official of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry does not distinguish among schools and there is utmost importance that activities be carried out in every

school for the benefit of the students. He stated that there are no differences between the schools in terms of the number and quality of activities, the Ministry of Education ensures that there are activities according to the school's preferences, and the Ministry of Education makes sure that these activities are brought to the schools and implemented in them in accordance with the principals' requests. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education accepts the choices of the principals regarding the programs they are interested in for their schools, and it ensures that these programs are implemented. The official explained that budgetary allowances for the program "Activity Group for Every Child", that exists only in the elementary schools, are transferred through the neighborhood community centers and other programs are funded by transfer of the funds through external operators that conduct the program.

The senior official of the Ministry of Education further stated that these programs are a right of the students, and therefore the principals must accept the activities within the school, and the principals themselves only have the right to choose which activities to bring into the school, in accordance with the students' needs. The principals' role is to then make their choices from the offerings that the Ministry of Education has chosen, and to choose 30%-40% of the school's students to participate in them.

All of the principals (12, 100%) noted that they choose the programs on the basis of the offerings that were presented, out of which they choose the programs relevant to their schools, and that the choice is carried out on the basis of availability – first come, first serve.

Most of the principals (8, 67%) noted that they do not have well-organized information regarding the programs and that the information they do have is very superficial. Three principals (25%) noted in the study that they attended a fair where the various programs were presented, but that the presentation of the programs was superficial.

One of the principals noted in the interview that "*the presentation of the various programs and the work program was superficial and not in-depth. I often hear about successful programs from other principals and then I submit a request to receive these programs .If I didn't consult other principals, I would not have heard about the programs.*"

All of the community center directors portrayed a picture of lack of involvement in decision-making and choosing programs (6, 100%). According to them, they do not play a central role in decision-making, but simply take part in implementation. Some of them (4, 66.6%) noted that they do not know on what basis the principals choose the programs.

Most of the community center directors (4, 66.6%) noted that they see the lack of involvement and lack of cooperation between the principals, the parents' committees and the responsible figures from the Ministry of Education and the Education Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality as an obstacle to the success of the programs.

All of the members of the parents' committees (6, 100%), asserted that they are not significantly involved neither in the decision-making process nor in the implementation of the programs. Three of the representatives of the parents' committees (50%) noted that there are initiatives and cooperation with the schools in cases in which the programs could have ramifications on education or if there is a foreseen conflict with societal values that are important to them (e.g. family honor, separation between the genders, protection of the children from security risks). According to the parents, this involvement takes place infrequently and only in specific instances. An example of typical parental involvement is when long-distance traveling is required for an activity or class. The parents are asked to arrange for the transportation on an on-going basis and to ensure that the physical conditions of the place are safe and secure. A different example is the involvement of parents in the question of mixing between the genders in certain activities, such as swimming. Representatives of the parents' committees described intervention and opposition to mixing between the genders, while emphasizing the importance of this separation during the activity:

*“As parents, we are practically not involved in the informal programs; no one asks us for our involvement. However, sometimes there are cases that we view as important – and even very serious – that require our intervention. For example, there was the issue of choosing a swimming pool. At first, the school had difficulty finding a pool with separate swimming during the swimming class and wanted to hold the class in a mixed pool. This was completely unacceptable to us- it is in contravention of our values. In order to resolve the matter, we on the parents' committee worked and looked a lot until we found a pool that conformed to our standards.”*

The study revealed that all of the participants, the principals, the members of the parents' committees and community center directors, were interested in taking part in the decision-making process by the Ministry of Education and also to play an active role in what happens within their schools.

For example, one of the community center directors noted: *“We have a personal need for greater involvement, and that these classes take place within the community centers.*

Similarly, we need to be involved in establishing the content of the various programs, and in providing training. If this happens, the programs will be more successful and appropriate, in my opinion.” These words of the community center director reflect the need of the directors to be more involved and have more access for educational issues, but in the reality of the Arab community, particularly in East Jerusalem, the activities that take place in the community centers are not perceived as significant educational programs, rather as free-time activities. Various studies in the Arab community (e.g., Alayan, 2012; Yair & Khatab, 1995)<sup>3</sup> demonstrate that Arab students only regard programs carried out in the schools – and not programs that take place in community centers – as being educationally significant.

### **3. The Manner of Choosing the Students for the Programs**

As stated above, the programs are not intended for the school’s entire student body, and the participants are about 30% to 40% of the student population, who are selectively chosen by the principals and the educational staff.

A number of principals noted that there are programs intended for strong students (e.g. a robotics program) and programs intended for students with behavioral problems, with the objective of reducing the drop-out rate (e.g. surfing). These two programs, robotics and surfing, are considered prestigious and therefore most of the principals strive to receive them, but they are not available in all the schools. The programs that are held in all of the schools are part of the “Extra-Curricular Activity for Every Child” program, the cost of which is relatively low.

The principals emphasized that the selective nature in choosing the students is intended for the benefit of the students (12, 100%). On the contrary, most of the community center directors (5, 83.3%) find that there is a lack of equality in choosing the students, and that often the schools choose the stronger students in order to improve the school’s image.

The choosing of strong students to participate in the programs was also raised by 4 (66.6%) of the representatives of the parents’ committees, but they actually justified this, explaining that they regard informal education as intended to provide reinforcement to the strong students.

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3] Alayan, Samira (2012), *Good and Meaningful Education: Positive Educational Experience of Palestinian-Israeli Graduates*, Dapim 53, pp. 144-167; Gad Yair & Nabil Khatab (1995) *Changing of the Guards: Teacher-Student Interaction in the Intifada*, Sociology of Education, vol. 68, no. 2 (Apr., 1995), pp. 99-115.



These findings demonstrate, in our opinion, that there is a need to expand the scope of these programs to include weaker students as well. Informal education has the potential to serve as a meaningful tool for reduction of socio-economic gaps by providing opportunities for alternative avenues of success for students who encounter difficulties in formal education; for acquiring many skills that are not taught as part of formal studies; and for formation of social connections and self-empowerment. Therefore, it is important to expand the explanations provided on this matter and to expand the circle of participants beyond the strong students.

Another main finding arising from the study is the requirement of the Ministry of Education for attendance by at least 80% of those registered for the program. According to eight of the principals (66.6%), each course includes 15-20 students. The Ministry of Education conditions the operation of the courses on continued attendance. If the required attendance is not reached, the course is discontinued.

*“This situation often leads us to try to recruit students who are not necessarily interested in the programs or for whom the programs are not appropriate, because if we do not manage to maintain a certain level of attendance the course is simply canceled; there are courses that might be canceled due to one student.”*

Thus, when the principals were asked to choose the programs from the existing offerings of the Ministry of Education, they chose at the outset those courses that they believed were the most appropriate for their students. However, after these programs filled up, they were forced to register certain students for other programs in order to meet the attendance requirements of each course. Thus, some of the principals (5, 42%) noted that programs were chosen that were not meaningful, in their opinion, for the school and its students.

This issue was also raised by the community center directors. All of the community center directors (6, 100%) noted that the payment transferred to them for operation of the programs is conditioned on the percentage of students participating in the program. If there was a low level of participation, it was liable to lead to a lower level of payment. Two community center directors (33.3%) noted that this requirement lead to a situation in which they were forced to pay from the budget of the community center itself in order to continue the courses with low levels of attendance.

It is worthwhile to examine the continuation of a course not only in accordance with the level of attendance. It could be that in a focused yet excellent manner, while it might

address the needs of a smaller number of students, with the right content it is worthwhile to continue such a program. The cancellation of on-going courses or activities a short time after they begin, without appropriate explanation or warning, undermines the parents' and students' trust and is liable to impair the educational process that the activity was intended to promote.

#### **4. Conditioning of Popular Programs on Use of the Israeli Curriculum**

When the study participants were asked about the Israeli curriculum, the Hebrew language, and Israeli policy regarding East Jerusalem, most of them were hesitant to discuss these issues, and preferred not to answer the questions. There were even many instances in which they asked not to discuss political issues in order not to make problems for themselves. Three principals (25%) noted that responsible officials from the Educational Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality conditioned the programs on bringing intensive Hebrew language curricula into the school, whereas two of the principals (17%) denied this assertion. The remainder of the principals (7, 58%) did not agree to discuss this issue and preferred not to answer the question.

However, the findings revealed that in providing the more successful and popular informal education programs, such as robotics and "knowledge industry", preference was given to schools that used the Israeli curriculum. Indeed, the senior official from the Ministry of Education asserted in an interview that there is no preference given to students studying according to the Israeli curriculum as compared to students using the Palestinian curriculum and that the allocation of programs is done with equality; but according to half of the principals (6, 50%), when the Israeli curriculum is used in the school, they receive more of the popular informal education programs than do those schools that do not use the Israeli curriculum. According to one of the principals, *"preference is given to schools that use the Israeli curriculum as opposed to the Palestinian curriculum in receiving the more successful and popular programs."*

This point is consistent with a finding brought to our attention by the principal of one of the schools that teaches the Palestinian curriculum: During the first year of having informal education activities, our school had a successful program. Immediately with the end of the school year he submitted a request for his school to receive the program in the following year as well, but the request was denied and receipt of the same program was conditioned on introducing the Israeli curriculum into the school.

Another principal noted: *“I had a successful program in the school and students participated in it and immediately at the end of the year we asked for the program again but they turned down our request, and insisted that I introduce the Israeli curriculum into the school in order to receive the programs that we were requesting.”*

Another principal of a school using the Israeli curriculum noted that the decision to introduce the Israeli curriculum into the school was, among other things, made in view of the resources that introducing the Israeli curriculum offered: *“Introducing the Israeli curriculum into our school was mainly in view of the significant resources that this curriculum brings with it. If we did not introduce the Israeli curriculum, a significant portion of the programs would not be in the school. We also have the informal education programs by virtue of using the Israeli curriculum.”*

## **5. Contents of the Various Programs and Their Adjustments**

There are many programs offered by the Ministry of Education and informal education activities are held in all schools within both the official educational framework and within the recognized but unofficial education framework. As stated previously, the principals must choose from the offered programs for their students. The choice of programs is made by the principal, who also often consults with a number of people from the educational and the administrative staffs of the school.

According to all of the principals (12, 100%), there have been programs in their schools for the past two years.

The principals classified the programs according to: educational programs, leisure time programs, and leadership and guidance programs.

The study results pointed to a multiplicity of **leisure time activities**. Among such activities held in the schools are: photography, young chefs, arts and crafts, chess, basketball, soccer, Zumba, Dabka, farming, cinema make-up, and Taekwondo.

Two dominant programs that were particularly prominent among the leisure programs and that were, according to the principals, carried out in their schools (6 principals) to their great satisfaction, were surfing and outdoor adventure. These two programs are carried out outside of the schools themselves in areas with nature or water and they are primarily intended for students with behavioral problems. Most of the principals with these programs in their schools pointed to high satisfaction with the programs and said that they have a

positive effect on the students. According to them, these programs are very popular and students do not drop out of school because they want to participate in them. In addition, they emphasized that the programs enable East Jerusalem students to go out and engage in physical activity, which is especially important in view of the lack of social activities and meeting places in their neighborhoods.

According to the senior official from the Ministry of Education, since some of the programs – such as surfing, swimming and robotics – are expensive, they cannot be held in every school and therefore they are held only in schools classified by the Ministry of Education as “red schools,” i.e., schools with a high drop-out rate and low academic achievement on the part of the students.

In light of the great success of these courses, and precisely because of the significant lack of leisure-time activities outside of this informal education system, it is appropriate to consider expanding these programs to many more schools, and perhaps even instead of other, less popular courses.

Another leisure-time activity held outside of the school is swimming. This activity is described as a beneficial activity for students and, according to the principals, is not offered by all of the schools. The present study found that swimming courses are offered by only two out of 12 schools. A number of principals (4, 33.3%) noted that this course is available for the most part only in all-boys schools. In the all-girls schools and in mixed gender schools, the principals are expected to get the parents’ approval to participate in the program, but there is not necessarily parental consent within every neighborhood for their daughters to participate in swimming classes, regardless of whether they study in an all-girls school or in a mixed-gender school. Those parents who do agree to swimming lessons condition their consent on special terms, e.g. restricting the pool to girls-only during the classes, due to the traditional culture and customs practiced in the neighborhood.

Regarding this matter, one of the principals noted as follows: *“Swimming classes in the neighborhood is a very sensitive matter. In order to receive the approval of all of the parents of the girls participating in the classes, we were expected to rent the entire pool facility while the activity is held and the girls are there. The parents impose an absolute prohibition against letting boys into the facility. This makes it difficult for us because we do not have a swimming pool in the neighborhood and we are forced to send them to Jewish neighborhoods in order to hold the classes. I am sometimes forced to be available while the class is going on in order*

*to receive reports regarding how it went and if the girls got home safely without problems. This is a difficult task and principals are expected to deal with it as well.”*

From the principal’s words it transpires that there is a need for cultural accommodation of the programs to cultural needs and social codes of the population, and the existence of a swimming pool with separate times for boys and girls constitutes an expression of such accommodation. It is very important that activities such as surfing and swimming be offered both to boys and to girls and if accommodations are made prior to introducing such programs, this promotes equality between the genders.

Among the programs that were classified by the principals as **educational programs**, they mentioned robotics, language arts, knowledge industry, The Young Physician, Scouts and advanced mathematics.

The principals noted that programs integrating leisure-time activities and studies are important programs for the students and expressed satisfaction from the carrying out of these programs in the schools, more so than exclusively leisure-time activities.

However, the principals noted that they would be more satisfied if they had been included in the manner of the programs’ operation and if the informal education counselors (“Madrachei Ogen”)<sup>4</sup> came from their school staff.

As noted above, the participation of the principals in choosing and implementing the programs that are operated is very important for the success of the program in the school.

All of the principals (12, 100%) agreed that the most significant contribution of the informal education programs is the opportunity to release energy and to find space to run around, especially when there is no possibility of doing so in other places. Many of them noted the informal education programs’ other advantages and made suggestions for improved use of them, as shall be detailed below. Some of the principals (9, 75%) included the

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4] The informal education counselors (“Madrachei Ogen”) are all of the counselors from the Ministry of Education working in the field of informal education; The informal education coordinators (“Rakazei Ogen”) work under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality and an important part of their job is to create a connection between the formal and informal educational systems, as well as supervision of the counselors, evaluation of them and examination of their suitability for the program. According to the senior Municipality official “*the viewpoint most taken into consideration is that of the informal education coordinators, more so than the school principal.*”

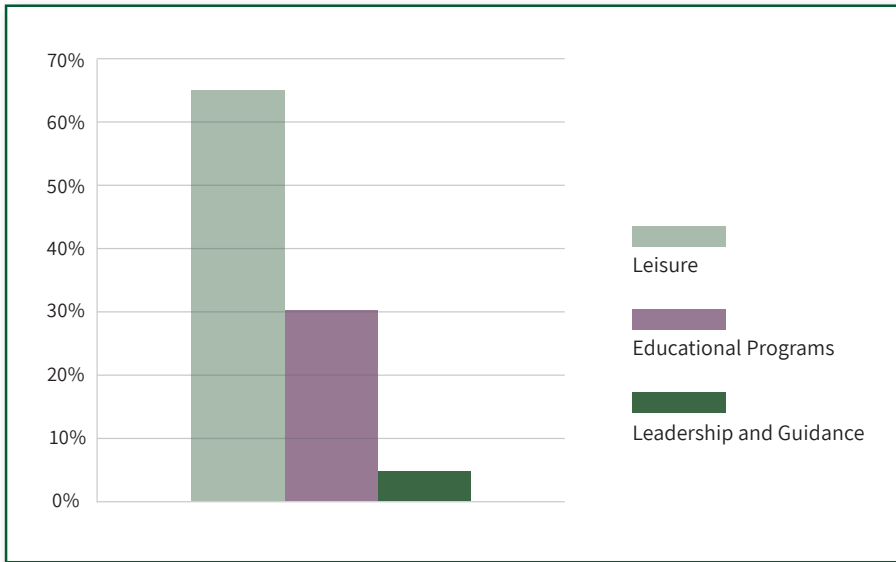
intensive Hebrew language courses within the informal education programs and thought that since the programs take place in learning centers in the afternoon and not during the regular school day, students do not consider it to be a serious program of study, rather as another leisure and entertainment program. This insight also emphasizes the importance of integrating educational content with the essentials of leisure and physical activity that characterize informal education.

*“The students study various subjects all day. Frontal instruction. Naturally, students in East Jerusalem find the Hebrew language difficult and don’t enjoy studying it. These students do not have the opportunity to attend extra-curricular activities. There are no places of entertainment in their neighborhoods, they are always locked up. To come and expect that they would want to learn even more material in their free time in the afternoons after a long day of school is very problematic. They prefer activities that are fun where they can play and relax. Even if they attend the Hebrew language courses, they won’t take it seriously and they won’t go happily,”* one of the principals stated.

Regarding the programs defined by the principals as **leadership and guidance programs**, only one principal noted that he has a program that develops and strengthens the students’ leadership abilities. It was important to this principal to mention the existence of the debate program in his school, which, in his opinion, is an important program that develops leadership qualities and responsibility in the students. The principal asserts that it is important that there be more programs of this kind in the school, but unfortunately, the programs offered do not include additional programs whose goal is to train young leaders in East Jerusalem.

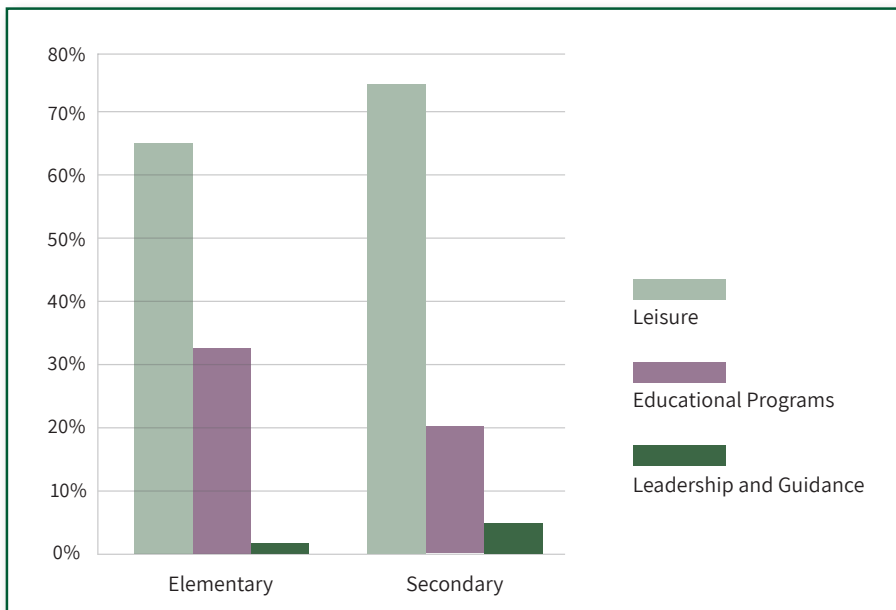
Two other principals (17%) noted that they regard some of the leisure-time programs as having the ability to develop the students’ leadership qualities in spite of the fact that this is not the main objective of such programs (e.g. outdoor adventure and basketball). The remainder of the principals (9, 75%) noted that they do not have any programs intended for purposes of developing the students’ leadership abilities and that most of the programs they have are intended solely as leisure activities.

**Chart Number 1** – The Kinds of Programs in Percentages according to the Principals’ Reporting – General



It can be seen from the graph that 65% of all of the programs operated in the schools participating in the study are leisure activities, 30% are educational programs (learning centers and Hebrew language courses) and 5% are leadership and guidance programs.

**Graph Number 2** – Types of Programs in Percentages According to the Principals’ Reporting



## 6. The Counselors and Quality of the Guidance

The fact that the supervision of the informal education program is carried out on the ground by the school rather than by outside providers was brought up a great deal in the study by the principals. Most of the principals (10, 83.3%) noted that the administrative staff (the principal or deputy principal) remain in the school while the informal education activity is occurring in order to provide their additional oversight of the programs in the school. According to all of the principals (12, 100%), this occurs in spite of the fact that the main official supervisors of the programs are the supervisor of informal education the informal education coordinators.

Most of the principals (11, 92%) noted that they would prefer that the informal education coordinators were teachers from their schools, because they are more familiar with the schools and with their educational approach. In such a case, the principals would not have to remain for purposes of supervision and oversight because they would be able to trust the teacher who is serving as the informal education coordinator (2, 17%). For example, one of the principals who asked that the informal education coordinator be from the school noted: *“We know him and trust that he knows the students and their needs; he is more serious because he is part of the staff; and he is familiar with the educational approaches and knows how to approach the students because he comes from the field of education; and we and the parents know him and trust him more.”* According to a small number of the principals (3, 25%), during the present year they were given the opportunity to choose the informal education coordinator from among the teachers at the school, and this makes things easier for them.

In our opinion, this request of the principals should be considered, however the potential damage to the need for refreshing of the ranks, diversification, bringing in different methods, and innovation must also be taken into account. It is important that the students also encounter other opinions, not just those of the educational staff of the school.

The study showed that the choice of the counselors for the programs is not made by the school principals or by the community center directors. According to the responsible official from the Jerusalem Municipality, it transpires that the counselors were not chosen by the Municipality, rather by the companies operating the programs (the providers). However, the Municipality does have the right to replace or fire them if they are not suitable and do not work as necessary for the program. Other findings showed that the principals have the right to ask the informal education coordinators to replace the counselors if they are not



good and if there are complaints about them on the part of the students. According to most of the principals (10, 83.3%), there is a possibility to request the replacement of counselors in the event they are not satisfied with them, and such requests are dealt with quickly by the responsible parties. However, seven principals noted that there is a significant shortage of counselors, which prevents the provision of high quality service in cases in which they are forced to change counselors. Two principals (17%) noted that there is no possibility at all to switch counselors in view of this shortage.

Most of the principals (9, 75%) were under the impression that a significant number of counselors had not received sufficient training. Six principals (50%) noted that the counselors lacked any educational approach, which prevented them from dealing effectively with the students. Two principals (17%) stated that they are satisfied with the counselors they have in the school.

According to the principals, there is a need for more thorough and comprehensive training for the counselors (9, 75%) and for insisting upon developing their educational side (6, 50%).

One of the principals said *“most of them are university students who have undergone one or two training courses and this is not entirely appropriate; they are not really educators; they do not always know how to deal with the school students. How to enable them to enjoy while setting boundaries, not to be too strict with them.”*

Another principal said *“I had a case where one of the counselors did not know how to deal with the students and burst out crying. I am expected to deal with the students and the counselors.”*

According to the senior official of the Ministry of Education, the counselors go through continuing education programs, but these are only provided to the informal education coordinators, youth coordinators, Scouts counselors and any counselor appointed by the Ministry or the Municipality. The new counselors receive 90 hours of continuing education during their first year and 30 hours in each subsequent year. On the contrary, training was not provided to the counselors from the outside providers. Therefore, according to the official, it is mainly the counselors from the outside providers who are problematic and unprofessional.

According to the senior official of the Ministry of Education, 300 organizations are operating in East Jerusalem, marketing informal programs to the residents (e.g. music classes, theater classes), but they are not willing to work with the Ministry of Education for political

reasons. And, according to him, this explains the fact that there is a shortage of trained and professional counselors. This is particularly the case, according to him, in view of the fact that Government Decision was implemented suddenly and without advance preparation.

### **7. The Need for Transportation Home at the End of the Activity**

All of the principals (12, 100%) noted the problem of dispersing the children at the conclusion of the informal education programs, both with respect to programs taking place inside the school and those off the premises. The students are not provided with transportation services that return them from the activities to their homes. Regarding the programs held outside of the schools, all of the principals (12, 100%) noted that the students do receive transportation to and from the school, but they have to make their own way home from school at the conclusion of the program. One principal (8%) noted that he takes upon himself to find transportation for the students participating in the programs and he finances it from the school budget, which constitutes a significant financial burden. The principals (12, 100%) all noted that this lack of transportation prevents students who do not live near the school, and whose parents cannot pick them up, from participating in the programs. According to all of these principals (12, 100%), this issue prevents students from lower socio-economic backgrounds from participating in the programs. All of the principals (12, 100%) noted that they have corresponded with the Municipality a number of times regarding the need to provide transportation, but that the Municipality has turned down their requests. All of the members of the parents' committees (6, 100%) noted that the lack of transportation home was the main problem preventing a number of students from participating in the programs and constitutes an obstacle to successful programs.

The principals of the special education schools also noted this difficulty and that there is particular importance for transportation for students with special needs. Until now, according to the principals, they dealt with the issue by providing transportation out of the school's budget or by a change in the school day, such that the informal education programs were put into the regular school day. This change did reduce the drop-out rate; however, it increased the students' and teachers' workload during the time of formal lessons and created tremendous pressure on them, particularly in view of the shortage of classrooms.

## **8. The Need to Provide Meals During the Activities**

In addition to transportation, the study revealed a need for providing meals (light or hot meals) to the students participating in the after-school activities.

According to all of the principals (12, 100%), the Ministry of Education does not fund meals for the students participating in the activities, which makes it difficult for many of the students to remain in school in order to participate in the programs. The students are hungry and this is the reason that many of them drop out of the programs. One of the principals in the study noted that he funds food for the students out of contributions (simple sandwiches). Half of the principals (6, 50%) noted that receiving a snack after the school day can play a significant role in raising the students' motivation to participate in the program and reduce the drop-out level.

One of the principals asserted that the failure to provide snacks prevents students from lower socio-economic backgrounds from participating in the programs.

One of the principals noted that *“so these are older students, they go by themselves to buy food and not all of the students are able to do. This happens particularly when the programs do not take place in the school, and it is therefore impossible to prevent students from buying food during their breaks. There were cases in which the counselors found it hard to watch the students who did not have money looking at the other students eating and bought them food from their own money.”*

## **9. The Need for Additional Budgetary Provisions for Activities on School Premises**

According to the study, most of the programs (approximately 90% of the programs taking place in the schools that participated in the study) take place on school premises after regular school hours. According to the senior Ministry of Education official, if the programs had taken place in the community centers, a large portion of the parents would not have sent their children to the programs. Regarding these programs, most of the principals (10, 83.3%) related to them as programs that require them to stay in the school in order to provide personal security to the students and to protect school property. The principals noted that they are required to fund supervision and security for the students, and some of the principals noted that the reason for this is that they do not trust the informal education counselors to ensure the students' safety.

According to the study's findings, there are additional financial costs to the schools due to the operation of the programs on school premises. Five principals (42%) noted that the operation of informal education programs often imposes costs on the school budget, e.g. photocopying, electricity, cleaning, for which they are not reimbursed. This cost makes it difficult for the principals to continue with the programs in the long run.

### **10. The Need to Make the Programs Suitable for Students with Special Needs and to Provide Special Training for the Counselors**

According to the principals in special education (2, 100%), there is a need for programs accommodated to the needs of the students – students with learning disabilities, autism, impaired vision, cognitive disabilities, behavioral problems, and psychological problems. There is also a need for counselors who have undergone appropriate training and are familiar with special methods that are appropriate for students with special needs. Counselors who work in regular schools and present informal education programs in such schools, cannot, according to these principals, present these same programs to students with special needs unless adjustments are made.

The principals also asserted that no consideration is given to the special needs of students in special education when it comes to the budget and that they receive budgetary allocations like those of the regular schools. This assertion is strengthened by the statement of one of the responsible officials from the Municipality, who noted that when the budgetary allocations for the programs are made, no preference is given to special education.

### **11. The Lack of Infrastructure and Public Buildings and Facilities**

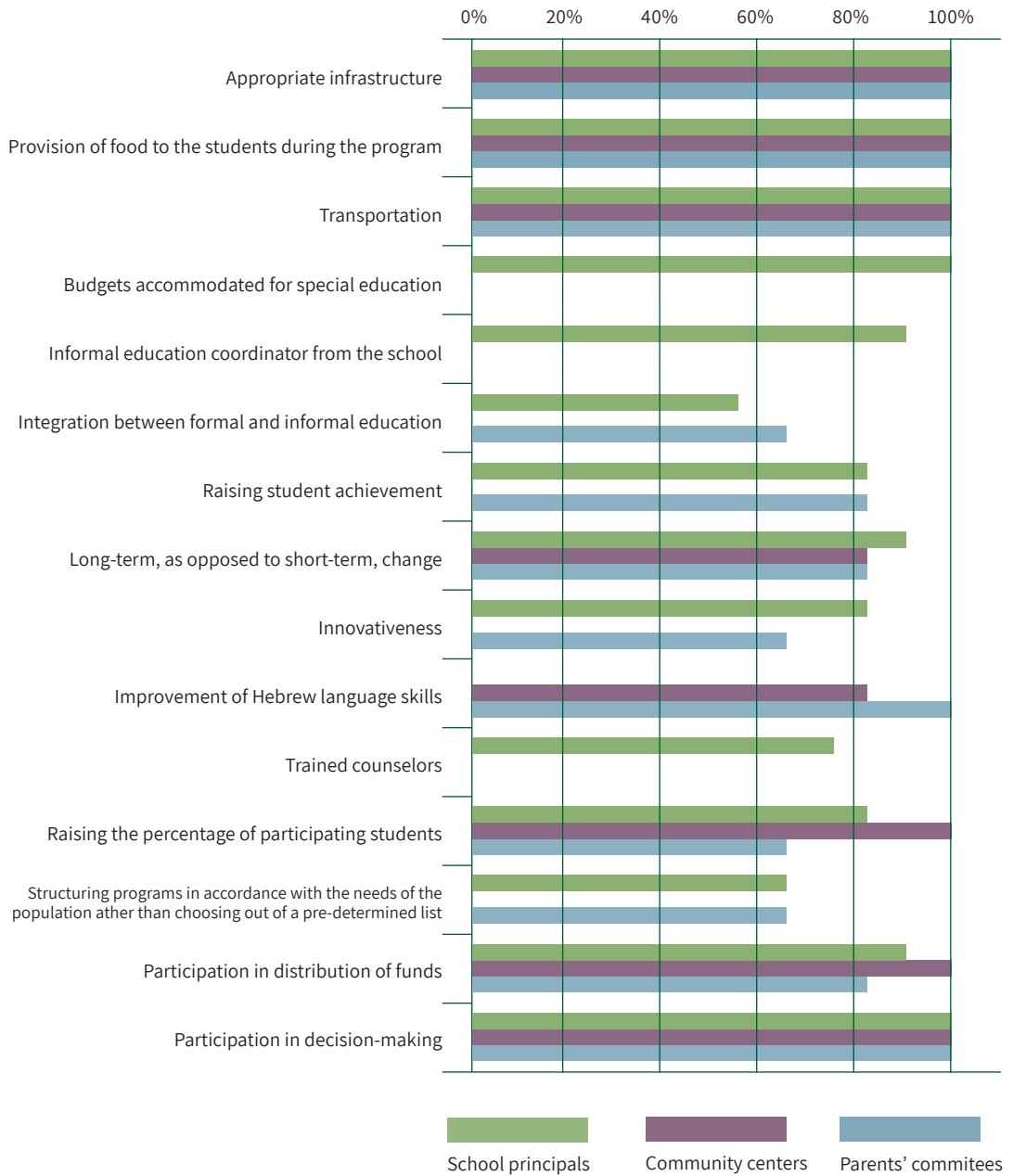
All of the principals (12, 100%) raised the problem of school infrastructures which are not suitable to the needs of the informal education activities, e.g. small classrooms, the absence of sports fields, the shortage of closed auditoriums. This situation prevents schools from bringing in activities requiring large spaces or forces them to cancel sessions when the weather is not suitable (e.g. sessions that take place in the schoolyard, in the case of rain or heatwaves).

All of the representatives of the parents' committees (6, 100%) also noted that the infrastructure was very important and that this constitutes a central problem for the success of the programs. For example, one of them noted: *“Most of the schools do not have good yards, nor are there facilities in the neighborhoods, the classrooms are very small and therefore it is difficult to successfully operate the programs. This is even worse with*

*significant changes in the weather, particularly in the winter, when the activities have to be held in small classrooms. This also limits the operators of the programs so that the operation of the programs is not completely successful and also less enjoyable to the students, when they are in a small, crowded room.”*

The community center directors (5, 83.3%) agree with the importance of adequate infrastructure. In the words of one of the community center directors: *“We, as community center directors view the infrastructures as a serious problem, not only in the schools but also in the community centers themselves. There is a serious need to improve the physical conditions of the community centers themselves.”*

**Graph Number 3** – The Needs of Informal Education according to the Groups Participating in the Study<sup>5</sup>



5] Where there is no reference to one of the entities for a particular purpose, the percentage of the need appears as zero. This is not intended to note that such entity considered that the issue was fully addressed.

### III. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our study comprised in-depth interviews with the various relevant parties – school principals throughout East Jerusalem, including in the neighborhoods beyond the Separation Barrier; from official schools and unofficial but recognized schools; elementary and secondary schools; special education schools; boys schools, girls schools and mixed gender schools. Most of these use the Palestinian curriculum and some use only the Israeli curriculum while others use both the Israeli curriculum in addition to the Palestinian curriculum. We also interviewed community center directors, senior Ministry of Education and Jerusalem Municipality officials, and heads of parents' committees.

Our impression is that there is a great deal of informal education activity, and that over the past two years there has, indeed, been an increase in such activity and in greater commitment on the part of the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality to these programs and to financing them. We are pleased with these developments.

The large amount of activity is also recognized against the backdrop of the existing shortage of infrastructure for formal education and physical infrastructure for implementing the programs. In view of this shortage, the principals and the parents' representatives presented the great need for programs to improve the students' achievements and to prevent school drop-out, and for programs 'preparing their children for the advanced world and the work force.'

Alongside the understanding of these needs and in view of the current serious shortage, we believe that there is a great deal of importance to the continuation of informal education, while making minor changes that do not impact the uniqueness and the difference between informal and formal education.

#### **From the study and as detailed above, the following are our recommendations:**

1. It is appropriate to increase the involvement of the school principals and the parents in decision-making with respect to the content of the informal education programs.
2. The involvement of the parents in the content of the programs and the necessary cultural and social accommodation must be significantly increased.
3. The involvement and cooperation between the principals, the parents' committees and the responsible officials from the Ministry of Education and the Education Administration of the Jerusalem Municipality must be increased.

4. It is worthwhile to consider operating programs according to the specific needs of each school and to enable the school to construct programs specifically geared to its needs.
5. There must be a detailed and thorough presentation of the programs to the school principals prior to them having to choose programs for their schools.
6. There must be transparency regarding the considerations of the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality in choosing the programs and distributing them to the schools.
7. The number of students participating in the informal education programs must be increased. There should be a goal of increasing the number of students participating in such programs by at least 50% of the number of students in the school system in East Jerusalem in the next two years.
8. Transparent criteria for choosing the students for participation in the programs is necessary, in order to: increase the provision of equal opportunities, to enable weaker students to participate, and to ensure that students are chosen according to their needs and not to enhance the school's image.
9. It is appropriate to consider holding extra-curricular activities not just according to the required percentage of attendance, and to enable a variety of appropriate activities according to quality based criteria as well.
10. It is appropriate to allocate funds for the programs not just according to the percentage of students participating, but rather mainly according to additional quality-based criteria such as their long-term contribution and the extent to which they result in leadership development.
11. The distribution of successful programs must not be contingent upon adoption of the Israeli curriculum. The vast majority of students study according to the Palestinian curriculum and it is suitable to the culture of the East Jerusalem community. Making the availability of the more successful programs contingent upon adoption of the Israeli curriculum hurts the schools and the image of informal education.



12. It is worthwhile to expand the scope of the programs that have enjoyed broad success, such as surfing, outdoor adventure and swimming that take place outside of the daily school setting, in spite of their costs. This is also important in view of the lack of leisure time activities and public facilities outside of the informal education system, therefore these programs should be operated on a long-term basis.
13. Swimming classes – they should be expanded at least for the next two years to half of the existing schools. The swimming classes also require sensitive and up-close cultural accommodation in coordination with the parents, in order to enable the girls to participate in the lessons.
14. Hebrew language study is more appropriate for the formal education system and the scope of such classes should be significantly increased. As part of the informal education program, Hebrew language studies could be promoted in an experiential format, but not at the expense of the allocation of hours for study as part of the formal education program.
15. It is important to increase high-quality leadership and guidance programs, such as the debate program. In spite of the political problem, informal education must also offer leadership programs for the empowerment of young people in East Jerusalem- both boys and girls- in the spirit of independence, criticism, freedom, openness and creativity in order to develop personal, social and political identity.
16. There is a need to expand informal education to programs of technological training, hi-tech courses, programming etc.
17. The appointment of informal education coordinators (“Rakazei Ogen”) from the school staff should be considered, but without impairment of necessary diversity and freshening the ranks.
18. The schools should be compensated for expenses laid out for activities taking place on school premises for purposes such as supervision, security, cleaning, photocopying and utilities.
19. The supervision of counselors from outside providers should be increased and training and continuing education courses should be provided for these counselors as well.

20. It is worthwhile to further examine the possibility of also providing programs through the many high-quality civil associations that exist in East Jerusalem, and to the extent necessary to examine creative solutions to difficulties arising out of activity together with the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem Municipality.
21. Informal education programs must include transportation for the students.
22. Informal education programs must include a budget for nourishing meals.
23. There is a need for programs accommodating the needs of students with disabilities and appropriate, specific training for counselors for work with these students. These programs should also be funded in a manner consistent with special needs.
24. The continued existence of informal education and its expansion depends upon the necessary improvement of infrastructure in East Jerusalem. It is imperative to continue to devote a great deal of resources to addressing the massive shortage of sports fields, halls for indoor activities, swimming pools and places for children to gather together in their free time.



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In the wake of Government Decision 3790 from May, 2018, for reducing socio-economic gaps and economic development in East Jerusalem, Ir Amim began to monitor its implementation. Beginning in January, 2020, the monitoring project is being carried out jointly by Ir Amim and the workers' organization WAAC-Maan.

You are invited to read the quarterly monitoring reports [here](#).

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Ir Amim is an Israeli nonpartisan organization that deals with the complexity of life in Jerusalem in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The organization acts to promote stability, equality and a consensual political future in Jerusalem.

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The workers' organization WAAC-Maan is a general workers organization which unites workers in Israel. In addition, the organization unites Palestinian workers who work for Israeli employers in industrial areas in the areas of the settlements. For twenty years the organization has operated a branch in East Jerusalem which assists the residents there to realize their social rights and acts to promote fair employment for women.

