

# Effecting Change in the Education System: Deriving Principles from Past Experience

---

Dalit Stauber | Hana Kidron | Omer Selivansky Eden



Policy  
Paper  
158

Abstract



**Policy Paper 159**

## **EFFECTING CHANGE IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM**

---

### **Deriving Principles from Past Experience**

Dalit Stauber | Hana Kidron | Omer Selivansky Eden

June 2021

Text Editor [Hebrew]: Dafna Lavi  
Series and Cover Design: Studio Tamar Bar Dayan  
Typesetting: Nadav Shtechman Polischuk  
Printed by Graphos Print, Jerusalem

ISBN: 978-965-519-344-2

No portion of this book may be reproduced, copied, photographed, recorded, translated, stored in a database, broadcast, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, optical, mechanical, or otherwise. Commercial use in any form of the material contained in this book without the express written permission of the publisher is strictly forbidden.

**Copyright © 2021 by the Israel Democracy Institute (RA)**  
Printed in Israel

**The Israel Democracy Institute**  
4 Pinsker St., P.O.B. 4702, Jerusalem 9104602  
Tel: (972)-2-5300-888  
Website: [en.idi.org.il](http://en.idi.org.il)

**To order books:**  
Online Book Store: [en.idi.org.il/publications](http://en.idi.org.il/publications)  
E-mail: [orders@idi.org.il](mailto:orders@idi.org.il)  
Tel: (972)-2-5300-800



This research was made possible through the support of the Eddie and Jules Trump Family Foundation.

The views expressed in this policy paper do not necessarily reflect those of the Israel Democracy Institute.

All IDI publications may be downloaded for free, in full or in part, from our website.

## **ABSTRACT**

In recent decades it has become increasingly necessary to make changes in public systems and to adapt these systems to external changes. Extensive resources – both organizational and financial – have been allocated for carrying out policy changes and reforms. Against this backdrop, a ramified literature has developed on various aspects of reforms and changes in public organizations: the motivations that trigger change in organizations, different kinds of change, the difficulties involved in effecting change in public systems, and the manner in which changes are implemented in organizations. The present study outlines a series of actions and principles that should be considered when working to effect changes, and which can increase the likelihood that the change will be implemented successfully in the system.

It should be stressed that despite the ramified literature on organizational change, we cannot point to unambiguous principles that can lead to successful implementation of change in various situations; therefore the process of change should be regarded as an art governed by uncertainty rather than a science. Consequently, the principles presented in this study should be viewed as guiding principles to be considered, not as mandatory actions required in every reform or change.

The study comprised four main stages:

1. A survey of international models that describe activities that contribute to the implementation of change
2. Interviews with education and policy experts
3. Thematic analysis of the interviews and of the records of dozens of meetings of Israeli study groups on the subject of changes in the education system
4. A survey of the implementation of the principles of the model in the national plan for the advancement of mathematics (“5X2”)

Based on these stages, a model adapted to the Israeli context was designed.

### **International Models**

Several models have outlined principles for implementing change in organizations in general and in education systems in particular, based on international experience. The present study was based on two recent projects in which extensive resources were invested. The first project, conducted by the strategic consulting firm McKinsey, addressed principles that make a substantial contribution to the implementation of policy changes in public organizations. These principles included the leaders’ commitment; clear goals and priorities; continual, systematic work; effective participatory communication with the main stakeholders in the reform; and recruitment of professionals with the proven ability to spearhead change.

The second study, conducted by the OECD, was aimed at formulating central motifs that contribute to implementing education policy, based on an analysis of a range of sources in the professional literature. The motifs retrieved were as follows: setting policy based on a clear, emphatic definition of the need that the policy is supposed to address and the way

it should do so; recruiting stakeholders and ensuring their commitment to the success of the process; taking into account the institutional policy and the social context in which the change is to be implemented; and developing a practical strategy for implementation, with attention to the specific tasks involved.

### **Development of the Israeli Model**

Against the backdrop of the international models, in the present study a model was created for the Israeli context. In order to develop the model, a thematic analysis was conducted of three Israeli information sources:

1. Semi-structured interviews with experts on education and policy for the purpose of the present study
2. Records of meetings of study groups run by the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute in 2015–2016, which addressed various aspects of planning for the Israeli education system
3. Records of study sessions run by the Initiative for Applied Research in Education of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities in 2016, in which participants sought to learn from science-education reforms carried out in Israel.

From these three sources, 616 propositions were extracted concerning principles that contribute to or hinder the implementation of education policy. Each proposition was catalogued under a common denominator or central theme. The themes were then refined into applied principles to be considered when promoting policy.

The principles were presented in a model that divides the political process into several stages that together make up the policy cycle.

## **The Israeli Model**

The Israeli model consists of four stages:

1. **Setting goals.** What are the goals and what is the scale of priorities among them?
2. **Designing the policy tool.** What is the most suitable policy tool for achieving the goals?
3. **Implementation.** What should be emphasized during utilization of the policy tool?
4. **Measurement and evaluation.** How will the policy tool's success in achieving the goals be determined?

Obviously, not all of the principles can be implemented in every change, but they should all be considered in every policy change process, and a conscious decision should be made as to which principles will be reflected in the particular process of change.

Below are the principles that should be considered in each of the four stages.

## **Activities for the Various Stages**

### *Principles for the goal-setting stage*

1. Commitment to a long-term policy with a clear scale of priorities that make it possible to focus efforts
2. Setting solid goals for the policy in response to actual needs
3. Formulating clear targets
4. Involvement by the minister and the political echelon as a condition for producing systemwide change

*Principles for the policy tool design stage*

5. Selecting the optimal policy tool for promoting the goal
6. Requiring pedagogical observation whenever a policy is changed
7. Including a range of stakeholders, among them the people actually working in the field (educators, organization staff, and administrators) and experts of various sorts
8. Flexible planning and maintenance of degrees of freedom that allow for adaptation to changing local needs and practical initiatives

*Principles for the implementation stage*

9. Involvement of a range of people active in the ecosystem<sup>1</sup> in the implementation stage in order to help achieve success
10. Designing an organizational structure that is supportive of change
11. Professionalization and recruitment of educators for hands-on work
12. Planning the budget while taking short- and long-term needs into account, and ensuring budgetary flexibility to meet local and changing needs
13. Maintaining the change, in part by deriving insights and learning lessons for the long term based on preservation of the relevance of the change

*Principles for the measurement and evaluation stage*

14. Defining indicators for tracking progress, based on awareness of the challenges of measurement
15. Conducting learning processes as a basis for effective planning and implementation

<sup>1</sup> Ecosystem: a human system with all its stakeholders and the entire range of networks within it.



In order to examine actual attitudes toward the contribution of the various principles to spearheading policy, a survey was conducted among principals of post-primary schools, teachers of five-unit math classes, and math department heads. The survey looked at their perceptions of how the principles developed in the Israeli model were implemented in the national plan for the advancement of mathematics, and at the extent to which the principles contributed to or detracted from the success of the plan.

The study aims at formulating a systematic framework of principles underlying the success of leading reforms in public systems in Israel, with an emphasis on the education system. Based on a review of international models that present the steps to be taken towards successful implementation of change; interviews with education and policy experts; a thematic analysis of the interviews and protocols of Israeli study groups on changes in the education system; and a survey examining the implementation of the model's principles in the National Program for the Advancement of Mathematics (5x2), this research presents a four-stage model for generating change in the education system, adapted to the Israeli reality. The study presents operational recommendations for each stage of the model, to serve as tools for policy makers when planning, implementing and integrating policy changes into the system.

**DALIT STAUBER** is a faculty member at the Ono Academic Campus and the Mandel School of Educational Leadership and a strategic consultant. Former Director General of the Ministry of Education and Chairman of the Stauber Committee for the Advancement of Women in the Civil Service.

**HANNAH KIDRON** is a researcher and lecturer in public policy. For about a decade she served in several positions in government ministries and was one of the founders of the Planning and Strategy Division in the Ministry of Education.

**OMER SELIVANSKY EDEN** holds a master's degree in economics from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev with a focus on public policy. At the time of writing, he was a member of the research team of the Center for Governance and the Economy at the Israel Democracy Institute.

June 2021

---

[www.en.idi.org.il](http://www.en.idi.org.il)

ISBN  
978-965-519-325-1