**National religious elementary school teachers’ and officials’ perception of the novel’s role as a source of social information / Dr. Sigal Hasson**

(The proposal is based on the doctoral dissertation presented to the Department of Information Science, Bar Ilan University).

Israel is a multicultural society and the religious sector also comprises diverse subsectors: according to the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 55.3% of students are in secular state schools under government oversight, 25.55% are in independent orthodox religious schools, and 19.15% in national-religious schools.

Each subsector seeks to create the educational system that conforms to its outlook and lifestyle. Orthodox Judaism espouses observance of Jewish laws, belief in their perpetuity, and reservations about introducing changes. This differentiated outlook also manifests in the sector’s approach towards secular society and the establishment, and influences all areas of the individual’s life. The national religious education system seeks to integrate life in modern society, including openness towards new ideas while simultaneously preserving traditional values. In this context books become important sources of social information, allowing the student to encounter social change and enabling the teacher to engage in dialogue with students around reading (Hermann, Be'ery, HellerCohen, Lebel Mozes, & Kalman, 2014).

Social informatics (a branch of Information Science) views the book as a tool for coping with situations of conflict as well as confronting the social and cultural changes of the information revolution of the twenty-first century (Baruchson-Arbib, 2000).

The current study examines how teachers in the national religious education system cope with dilemmas relating to the choice of books, and the considerations they apply when choosing activities. It also studies which perceptions serve as the basis for dialogue with students when encouraging reading for pleasure.

Qualitative research tools were used in the study. This included primarily the analysis of semi-structured interviews (N=43) while cross referencing policy documents which represent the organization’s philosophy and assist its intra-organizational socialization process (Raz, 2004). The large number of sources enabled a greater understanding of the phenomenon (Shlasky & Alpert, 2007).

Our findings show that reading, the book, and the dialogue around novels fill various functions at the school. Reading is viewed as having practical functions, the book is ascribed with an academic-learning role, and for teachers lacking the skills needed for engaging in emotion-based discourse which promotes the development of personal identity, which prevent students from using the book as an effective tool for attaining social information.

**References**

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