**Abstract**

The research has a number of interrelated goals. The first is to map, examine, and analyze educational policies for special education schools in Israel over the last three decades. The second is to explore and analyze how these policies affect the considerations of parents when choosing special education schools for their children. Finally, because the intersection of these issues of educational policy and educational choice emphasizes the conflict between two important values — egalitarianism and choice — it may result in tension between creating a society based on social justice and promoting economic development and competition.

**The Research Questions:**

1. To what extent, if at all, does the educational policy for special education schools in Israel promote egalitarianism? And choice?
2. Who are the main “players” and what are their “voices”? To what extent do those voices blend?
3. What are the parents’ considerations in choosing a special education school for their child?
4. To what extent are *de jure* and *de facto* policies in alignment, as reflected in the considerations of parents when choosing a special education school for their child?

The research will consider a purposeful sample of approximately 57 participants (five senior policy makers, four special education principals, eight first and second grade teachers, and 40 parents who have chosen special education schools).

The study will have three stages. First, the *de jure* policy will be examined using a thematic analysis of policy papers and interviews with policy makers. Then, the *de facto* policy will be analyzed by means of multiple case studies in four special education schools, which will be chosen in a purposeful sample in order to examine the parents’ choice process. Finally, the extent of alignment between the various policy levels will be analyzed.

The research methodwill be qualitative, employing the critical hermeneutics approach combined with multiple case studies. The method includes gathering and analyzing policy papers, analyzing interviews with policy makers, parents, principals, and teachers, and analyzing observations of the process of choice and registration in the schools.

The theoretical contribution will be to elucidate the policy discourse that has developed over time with respect to special education schools, including the identification of the principal values involved, and consideration of the tension between egalitarianism and choice.