**Abstract**

The research has a number of interrelated goals: To map, examine and analyze education policy for special education schools in Israel during the last three decades. To examine and analyze its effect on the considerations of parents in their choice of these schools. Since the phenomenon being studied emphasizes the conflict between two important values, namely egalitarianism and choice, tension may emerge between the ability to create a society based on social justice and the promotion of economic development and competition.

**The research questions:**

1. To what extent, if at all, does the education policy for the 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’ consideration 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 about 57 participants (5 senior policy makers, 4 special education principals, 8 Grade 1-2 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. In addition, 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 and will look at the parents’ choice process. Finally, the extent of alignment will be analyzed between the various policy levels. The *research method* will be qualitative according to the critical hermeneutics approach combined with multiple case studies. The method includes the gathering and analysis of policy papers, the analysis of interviews with policy makers, parents, principals and teachers and the analysis of observations of the process of choice and registration in the schools.

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