Israel Ranks Among Top Educated Countries Worldwide

A report published by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has ranked Israel as the second-most educated country in the world. The only country ranked more educated than Israel is Canada.

Other countries ranked within the top 10 list are Japan, the United States, New Zealand, South Korea, Norway, the United Kingdom, Australia and Finland. According to 24/7 Wall Street, which analyzed the OECD report, "Israel only joined the OECD in 2010. That year, its GDP per capita was more than $7,000 below the OECD's average. Despite this, the country's high school graduation rate was 92 percent in 2010, well above the OECD's 84 percent average."

In addition, 45 percent of Israel's population has a university or college degree, demonstrating how much Israeli society values higher education. As Elie Wiesel, political activist and Nobel laureate, once stated, "I don't recall a Jewish home without a book on the table."

Indeed, Israeli universities, such as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Technion, Ben-Gurion University and Tel Aviv University, are considered not only to be the best in the Middle East, but also world-class institutions, attracting students from around the world.

Additionally, Israel spent 7.2 percent of its GDP on educational institutions in 2009, the sixth-most among all the nations surveyed. This is important, for studies have demonstrated that countries that invest the most in education have the most educated populations.

According to the OECD report, the Ofek Hadash (New Horizon) education reform in Israel has significantly improved the wages of teachers and thus the quality of students' education. Indeed, the wages of elementary school teachers in Israel increased by 32 percent between 2005 and 2010, while the salary of high school teachers increased by 8 percent during this period. The OECD average for increased salaries for elementary school teachers was 5 percent, while the OECD average was a mere 4 percent for high school teachers.

Educational funding has a strong relationship to how many people pursue higher education, according to OECD chief media officer Matthias Rumpf. Countries with the highest percentage of residents with a college education usually privately invest in education.

In the United States, for example, 28 percent of the funding comes from private sources, while in South Korea, it is over 40 percent. In the U.K., it is 32 percent, while in Australia, it is about 33 percent. In Israel, it stands at 21 percent. Canadian private investment is only slightly higher than Israeli private investment in higher education.

According to the OECD, "Public funding provides a very large part of investment in education, but the role of private sources has become increasingly important. Some stakeholders are concerned that this balance should not become so tilted that it discourages potential students from attending tertiary education. Thus, it is important to examine changes in public/private funding shares to determine if they are influencing patterns and levels of student participation."

In Israel, students invest privately in their own college education, yet the costs are not so high as to discourage students from studying. Students in Israel don't usually pay off student loans for decades into the future like American students do.

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