INTEGRATING ARAB AND JEWISH STUDENTS IN COLLEGES IN ISRAEL: OHALO COLLEGE AS A CASE STUDY

Saleh Kharanbeh

Ohalo College

ABSTRACT: *The present article attempts to check the possibility of integrating Arab and Jewish students in colleges in the state, the current integration at Ohalo College is used as a case study. Participants comprised thirty Jewish and Arab, male and female students at Ohalo College in Katzrin, Israel. The current study investigated whether such integration can promote peace between Jews and Arabs. Aspiration for peace is a significant value of life in Israel, and it appears in various contexts and in political discussions. Peace promotes tolerance, prevents violence, and creates dialogue among the parties. Education for peace, which is expressed in integrating Jewish and Arab students, increases the value of higher education in general and the value of education for the Arab community, in particular, due to the inferior status Arabs in the state.The current study discusses the existing types of integration besides the integration possibilities in various academic institutions along with the hardships and obstacles that prevent Arab students from integrating as equals in the Jewish community.*

KEYWORDS: Arab Student, Jewish Student, Peace, Israel

INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

The question of why there is need for integrating Arab and Jewish students in colleges in Israel and the historical background of such a need will be discussed.

The hard situation of Arab citizens in Israel stems from their inferior position as an ethnic minority. The state ignores them and discriminates against them in many fields of human rights, such as issues of immigration and citizenship, the right to choose place of residence and place of work, ownership of lands, various privileges that are given or withheld by the authorities, and in short, in all fields of everyday life. This policy causes a growing gap between Jews and Arabs, citizens of Israel, who are pushed into the margins and cannot develop a full Israeli identity and cannot fully participate in the Israeli politics. The ethnic structure of the state does not enable it to grant basic rights of equality, identity, and security to all the citizens. Arabs in Israel belong to the Jewish majority to a certain extent, live in alienation and discrimination; their living standards are lower than those of Jews, they cannot develop a clear self-identity, personal empowerment, and future orientation (Samuha, 2001).

Like all minorities in the world, Arabs in Israel consider education an important factor in their personal and social development. Moreover, there is a growing recognition withing them of the significance of education as a tool in the political struggle and in their social interaction. This is expressed in the continuing increase in the level of education, including higher education, as well as the increase in the living standards, especially the consumption patterns,

changes that constitute crises in a society which is undergoing a process of transition (Arar & Haj Yahia, 2007).

Since the 1970s there is a persistent increase in the number of Arabs who pursue higher education in Israel. A real revolution has occurred in the issue of accessibility to higher education in the 1980s and 1990s, when the need to expand accessibility was raised by public figures, education people, and political leaders. Findings of various studies indicate that over the last decade the number of Arab students at universities has grown by 50% (Arar & Haj Yahia, 2007).

Accordingly, higher education within the Arab minority has two values: The first value is socio-economic and implies that education has become popular due to its being a tool of social mobility for minority members; the second value is socio-political, as higher education is used as a tool for achieving social and political targets of the individuals and the group. It is highly important to represent the Arab community in the Israeli society and not to miss excellent individuals who can contribute a great deal to society. Successful integration of the Arab-Palestinian citizens is essential for the society and economy in Israel in the aspiration for modernization, economic development, and equality (Yogev, 2001).

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Israel as a Multicultural Society

One of the main characteristics of integration and the need for integration arises due to the fact that the Israeli community is multicultural. Multiculturalism is an essential component of society; it allows better acquaintance among individuals and it creates co-existence. The multicultural educational concept, as defined by Yogev (2001), is an approach that calls for education for all students and not only for specific groups. The premise is that discussing and learning about the various cultural groups will increase the understanding, respect, and tolerance among groups (Yogev, 2001).

Abu El-Haija (2005) attempted to answer this question. After clarifying the background of the reciprocal relations between the minority and the majority in the state, he addressed the issue of pluralism and examined the issue from the perspective of diverse cultures in one society. Abu El-Haija (2005) believes that although Israel is a pluralistic state, it is an ethnic nation state. Like other nation states, Israel does not grant its various national groups the possibility to take part in social hegemony; it seizes control and power and thus preclude the possibility of having a real, pluralistic, civil society (Abu El-Haija, 2005).

The state of Israel controls educational institutes, including those of higher education. This control denies the Arab community the ability to influence allocation of social resources for establishing alternative educational institutes to those that state controls (Abu El-Haija, 2005).

The education system in Israel hesitated for years about the educational curricula for the Arab sector. "a question arose whether schools have to educate learned Arabs who know only Hebrew, or Arab citizens who are loyal to the state as well. Education figures claim that educating the Arab minority for good citizenship does not rely only on education but mainly on the general policy of the state towards Arabs" (Benziman & Mansour, 1992, p. 22).

Solomon (2007) suggested four goals for education for multiculturalism: a. accepting the narrative of the other; b. recognizing the suffering of the other; c. empathy towards the suffering of the other and expanding the trust in him or her; d. attempting to solve conflicts in non-violent ways. The difficulty in reaching these goals lies to a great deal in the centrality of the education system, from preschool to high school, which is expressed in various aspects such as the curricula, which are dictated mostly by the state, as well as the teaching methods and the textbooks (Solomon, 2007).

The centrality in the education system is accounted for in four goals: a. equality: Allocating identical resources for all children in order to provide them with "an equal starting point;" b. imparting knowledge, that is expressed in achievements compared internationally while shrinking gaps to minimal; c. educating on common national values such as history, Zionism, and religion; d. educating for common universal values such as ethics, tolerance, protecting the environment, and others. International comparison tests show that the Israeli educational system has not reached its proclaimed goals.

The Ministry of Education determines the policy in all that relates to pedagogy and contents, and local authorities create tools and conditions to help it fulfill this job. There are no legal rules; they reciprocate. Inspectors at the Ministry of Education check curricula, level of teaching, and the functioning of principals and teachers. They also inspect the condition of buildings, furniture, playgrounds, and equipment. One would expect an identical level, or at least similarity, between local authorities in all that relates to the education system, as the education system is centralized and operates identical curricula and employs inspectors and teaching staff. In reality, there is variance between local authorities, as each local authority is autonomous in initiating programs and projects (Kalkhhaim, 2001).

The key to education for multiculturalism lies in helping students develop inter-cultural abilities. An initial encounter with stereotypes, symbols, and characteristics of an outsider ethnic group will help individuals to fully know and understand the culture of the other. Education for multiculturalism is not only knowing the culture of the other but designing the environment in a way that reflects cultural diversity, and mainly creating structural changes that express this diversity. Education has to be designed in a way that suits each culture, race, and social group. There are two principles for the education for multiculturalism at schools: Intellectual education and ethical education. The intellectual education focuses on education for insight, and moral education addresses education that advocates morals and moral awareness. For example, recognizing that the other, who is equal to me in rights, is entitled to the same privileges. Currently, more and more emotional and psychological principles are added in perceiving ethics, and these are reflected in shame, worry, empathy, and in feeling more responsibility towards the other (Lam, 2000).

Education for Peace: Characteristics and Implications

Ever since the principle agreement between Israel and the PLO in mid September 1993 and the peace agreement with Jordan in October 1994, the Israeli society has been undergoing tremendous changes regarding the concept and the value of peace. These changes are expressed in educational institutes, as they are exposed to political dialogue that is run in the large frame of the Israeli democracy. The Oslo agreement reflects a large effort to establish a multi-stage process that enables promoting the value of peace without severely harming other essential values. There is no need to stress that the value of "peace" is highly significant in the Israeli entity, and it is reflected in various contexts and not only in political discussions, but in the

education system and in the entire society. The goal of education for peace is to promote social changes in a society that combines conflicts among various nations and diverse cultures (Solomon, 2007).

The value of peace embraces the multicultural concept, as crystallized in the recent decades. One of the goals of multiculturalism is to strengthen and empower each one of its cultures. The second goal is constructing relationships among the various cultural groups. Therefore, multiculturalism has to be developed without giving up the independence of any of the groups. Likewise, education for multiculturalism is also education for realistic recognition of constantly conflicted attitudes that can not have an absolute solution but a solution of mutual reconciliation, out of compromise with which each one of the parties can live. Supporters of this approach claim that multiculturalism is a way to deal with a current compound reality of Western countries such as the United States of America. Namely, multiculturalism constitutes an essential component of society that allows individuals to better know the various parts of the community and to create co-existence (Lam, 2000).

In the framework of education for peace some educational institutes hold activities such as mutual visits among Arab and Jewish schools, joint activities and projects among classes from Israel and the Palestinian Authority, joint workshops, seminars, weekend meetings, joint summer camps both in Israel and abroad, joint youth newsletter, bi-national theater, programs for preventing violence at schools, conflict resolution through peaceful ways, mediation through colleagues, non-violent communication, and others (Solomon, 2007).

Education for peace is education against ethnocentrism, for mutual understanding, equal rights, conflict resolution, giving legitimacy to the other party and accepting the narrative of the other as legitimate. It is education that teaches how one can live with his or her enemy. Curricula of the education for peace address viewpoints and human relationships in addition to relationships among nations, and therefore, different thinking and action patterns evolve jointly. Education for peace in terms of curricula is perceived as an educational apolitical movement. In general, curricula of education for peace focus on peaceful relationships among nations. In the Third World, curricula of education for peace stress aspects of resistance to discrimination, racism, economic and social inequality, and others.

By means of programs of education for peace one gets to know the international system through developing universal viewpoints and knowing behaviors of social groups in various countries. In addition, one gets to internalize values such as cooperation both among individuals and with the community as a whole, one can understand other nations, traditions, and values. Moreover, one can learn various strategies for achieving peace and security in relationships among nations and states, and one can learn how to resolve conflicts among various groups in nonviolent ways and how to deal with violence (Solomon, 2007).

One way to create patience and tolerance toward each other is through Arab-Jewish meetings in Israel. The underlying idea of these meetings is that they reduce stereotypes and prejudice while observing several basic conditions such as an environment of cooperation, ethical support, equal status, etc. Bar and Eedi (1995) indicated a number of advantages for meetings of Arabs and Jews: First of all, following these meetings the national identification of Arabs increases and they become more aware of the different positions of Jews and Arabs in various situations. Consequently, both groups feel less threatened by each other; both Jews and Arabs become less conforming and more critical about the status quo in the Arab-Jewish relationships. Additionally, participants become more realistic and less naïve regarding the

relations with individuals from the other nation, as the meetings help them see the conflict as more realistic. This view is reflected in recognizing the existence of the tough conflict between the nations, in giving legitimacy to the existence of the other nation, and in recognizing that both parties equally harm and are being harmed (Bar & Eedi, 1995).

Integration: What is it and how can it be achieved

Hanadin (2011) addressed the question of the integration of Arab students in the Israeli higher education system and the extent of this integration. For example, in the academic year (Tash-sa7), 11.8% of undergraduate students at universities in Israel were Arabs, whereas they constituted 20% of the population. The rate of Arab students decreases as they advance in academic degrees. This under-representation of a minority group is not specific only of the higher education system, it characterizes many public systems in Israel and in the world. Usually, the importance of the equal proportionate representation is addressed as part of the equality principle. However, this representation is twice as important in order to prevent 'missing' those excellent individuals whose contribution to the system can be great if only this system exerts efforts to locate them and to enable their successful integration according to their special needs (Hanadin, 2011).

The study of Hanadin (2011) attempts to deeply understand the issue of Arab students integration in the higher education system. Moreover, the study investigates how Arab students account for their integration in higher education in Israel and how they perceive successful integration. Hanadin also asks how academic institutes can make use of these insights in order to better serve students from diverse backgrounds.

The Effect of Personal Characteristics on Integration of Arab Students

Additional studies address the integration of Arab students in higher education in Israel and present findings that relate to personal aspects of the integration. Abu-Saad (1999) found that students with higher self-esteem estimated their abilities as higher and had higher academic ambitions. In contrast, as self-esteem decreased and fear of failure increased, academic ambitions were lower. Lack of maturity and limited life experience influence integration as well. The less life experience the student has, the harder is his or her integration in the higher education system (Abu-Saad, 1999).

Function of Language in the Ability to Integrate

An additional personal aspect that distinguishes between most Jewish and Arab students is the mother tongue. Roer-Strier and Haj-Yahia (1998) relate to the obstacle of language as a main barrier on the personal level. Arab students arrive enter higher education in which the teaching and the reading languages are not their first language, and they are required to adjust fast to a double challenge: they have to comprehend and take notes of lectures delivered in Hebrew, and they have to read academic articles in Hebrew and in English. Even students who speak Hebrew well face a challenge when they have to adjust to an educational system that is all managed in Hebrew (Roer-Strier & Haj-Yahia, 1998).

In his book a Dialogue between Identities, Halabi (2006) states that language expresses identity. He continues that language is a means of communication among humans, but that this is not all. It also expresses identity, culture, and heritage. Use of language constitutes a type of power. Humans use language in order to make others fulfill his or her will. People who speak that same language are attracted to each other because it provides them with a sense of security.

Language is also a cultural marker that classifies humans to social and to ethnic groups. Language functions as an axis in relations among groups in society. In multicultural communities there is a significant inequality in the value given to the languages they speak (Halabi, 2000).

In Israel Arabic is an official language beside Hebrew. In practice, however, Hebrew is the main language both officially and practically while Arabic stayed marginal. In our consciousness, Hebrew is associated with Zionism and Judaism, as Hebrew functioned as a means to unite the nation. Arabic, in contrast, functioned as a necessary means of communication according to the education system. Teaching the language at Arab schools is limited only to acquiring language skills and to comprehending it in order to use it (Halabi & Zak, 2006).

Benziman and Mansour (1992) claim that "the state's attitude to Hebrew reflects, in brief, its unclear policy towards the Arab sector in the whole domain of education and culture" (Benziman & Mansour, 1992, p. 153).

DIFFICULTIES AND BARRIERS

Arab Education System and Pre-Academic Education

An additional barrier to successful integration of Arab and Jewish students is laid in the Arab education system. Arab Schools do not provide a strong basis to those students who are willing to pursue higher education. Research studies that deal with the influence of the Arab education system on integration in higher education usually address the power of instruction, teaching methods, and learning skills acquired at schools. Teaching staffs at high schools constitute a significant and influential resource, mainly in a social environment where most of the adult generation does not possess academic education. One can find an example on that in the study of Venir-Levi (2008) in which she investigates the influence of the first academic female teachers at Druze schools. She found that these teachers served as a necessary and positive model for their female students. The education of female teachers brought to academic and social changes such as changes in teaching methods, expanding the teaching domains, changing social and gender norms in and outside schools, creating legitimacy for higher education amongst women and even a slow change in the cultural dialogue (Venir-Levi, 2008).

Studies at the pre-academic stage suffer from shortage in resources, and from the existence of two separate education systems, the Arab and the Jewish. These studies do not receive identical resources and constitute a significant barrier in the face of Arab students who wish to pursue higher education. Moreover, the Arab minority has a different cultural background. Besides, the low quality of schools in the Arab education system, as compared to the superior Jewish schools, bring to low grades in Mitzav tests in junior high schools and in Matriculation and international exams. Achievements in the Arab education system lag behind those in the Jewish education system and significant gaps form between the two education systems.

There are gaps in learning skills in addition to the gaps in knowledge. At high schools students learn mainly by heart and they do not acquire sufficient skills of comprehension, analysis, or critical thinking. Usually they use the phrase "min aljildah lil-jildah," which means from first page to last page. There use different methods at universities for which students were not prepared during high school.

Computer skills form a gap, too, as part of the interviewees were never required to work with a computer. When they get to universities they are not only required to submit papers that are typed on the computer but are also required to manage their study schedules, grades, and tests through computers. Even signing up for classes can be difficult for somebody who was never trained to use computers.

As a result of these data, the rate of Arab students who are entitled to Te'udat Bagrut (a certificate that students have passed the Matriculation exams) is lower that that of Jewish students (45% vs. 56% in 2009). Moreover, part of those who hold Te'udat Bagrut, their certificates do not meet the requirements of universities in Israel (36% vs. 48% in 2009) (Council for Higher Education, 2012).

Rates of Accepted and Rejected Arab Students to Universities in Israel

Since the 1970s a progress has been observed in the accessibility to higher education among the Arab minority in Israel. The progress is seen particularly among marginal groups in the Arab community such as the rural community and women who were denied the opportunity to pursue higher education in the past. Currently, the number of Arabs who hold university degrees in Israel is about 78,000. The number of Arab students at universities in Israel has increased; their number was about 10,718 in the academic year 2006-2007. An increasing number of Arab students have been pursuing higher education abroad, especially at universities in Jordan; their number reached more than 5,400 in the academic year 2008-2009. The greatest change occurred within Arab female students who have been pursuing higher education at colleges in Israel and abroad, especially in Jordan (32%) (Arar & Haj-Yahia, 2011).

It is worth indicating that there is a shortage of studies that compare between various groups in the Arab community, especially studies of aspects that can be generalized to the whole Arab community. Similarly, there are insufficient studies that address the Bedouin community in general, and specifically the Bedouin or the Druze female students.

Integrating Arab and Jewish Students at Ohalo College in Katzrin

The study of Kharanbeh (2015) investigated the contribution of integrating students from various cultures to bridging gaps in society, perceiving the other more accurately, and to understanding the other. The participants were 30 adult male and female students from the College of Ohalo in Katzrin the North of Israel. Fifteen participants were Jews and 15 were Arabs and they were Muslim, Christian, Druze, and Bedouin.

Hypotheses of Study

The first hypothesis of the study is that there is a positive correlation between favoring studying in integrated classes and the perception that integration of multicultural students contribute to bridging gaps in society. This hypothesis is based on the findings of Pearson (2004) which showed a positive correlation between favoring to study in integrated classes and the perception that integrating multicultural students contributes to narrowing gaps in society. In other words, the higher the extent of favoring to study with a student from a different religion, the greater is his or her perception that integrating multicultural students contributes to narrowing gaps in society.

The second hypothesis of the study is that there is a positive correlation between favoring to study in integrated classes and the perception that integrated learning contributes to accepting

the other. As will be seen, the findings of the study show that there is a positive correlation between favoring integrated classes and the perception that integrating multicultural students contributes to accepting the other and perceiving peace among nations. In other words, the more students prefer to study with students from a different religion, the greater his or her perception of the contribution of integrating students to accepting the other.

The findings of the study brought to the following conclusions:

1. When students prefer to study in integrated classes, they also believe that this contributes positively to narrowing gaps in society.

2. When students prefer to study in integrated classes, they also believe that this contributes positively to accepting the other.

3. Classes that integrate Arabs and Jews lead to narrowing gaps and accepting the other in the Israeli society.

The first hypothesis of the study was supported; positive correlation was found between favoring to study in integrated classes and the perception that integrating multicultural students contributes to narrowing gaps in society ($r=.60$, $p<.001$). In other words, the greater the extent of favoring to study with students from a different religion, the greater the perception that integrating multicultural students contributes to narrowing gaps in society and vice versa.

The second hypothesis of the study was supported as well. A positive correlation was found between favoring to study in integrated classes and the perception that integrating multicultural students contributes to accepting the other and to perceiving peace among nations ($r=.53$, $p<.001$). In other words, the greater the extent to which students prefer to study with students from a different religion, the greater the perception that integrating students contributes to accepting the other, and vice versa.

These findings accord with literature that states that encounters between Arabs and Jews reduce stereotypes and prejudice, create an atmosphere of cooperation and moral support, and lessen conflicts and grudges (Zonenshein, 2008).

Findings are particularly interesting given the escalation over the last weeks, as violence has peaked and conflicts have aggravated between Jews and Arabs in the Israeli society. These findings are encouraging and raise hopes for possible co-existence between Jews and Arabs. In order to achieve this, one has to encourage recognizing the other and continuing to integrate cultures and nations.

Arab-Jewish Meetings – Project of Nave Shalom

Nave Shalom is a unique place for initiated Arab-Jewish meetings in Israel. For over twenty years there is an exceptional approach, which was formed through constant dialogue between Arab and Jewish facilitators, and which stems from our reality life. According to this approach, the encounter between Jews and Arabs is an encounter between two national identities, and its goal is to expand the awareness of the participants of the conflict, to study and build their self-identity through the encounter with the "other."

The school that advocates the living together was established in 1972 in a mixed town of Jews and Arbs, Nave Shalom- Wahat al-Salam. From a small group of several couples the town grow and developed over the years, and in 2006 forty families lived there, half of these families are

Jewish and the other half is Arab. However, with development comes disillusionment. From a transnational revolutionary group came a compound community that embraces individuals of all colors and kinds. The attempts to blur the national origins have been exchanged with attempts to preserve the identity of each group and for a continuous dialogue among the clear-cut national identities. Along the years, just like with all small groups who live together, with the advantages and disadvantages with such a living, conflicts arose between new and old residents, and between various interest groups, and in the background stands the national dimension. On times of conflicts and crises the background becomes the picture itself. This is what happened during the Gulf War and the Intifada. Conflicts also arise around commemorating the Independence Day and the Holocaust Memorial Days. Nonetheless, the community came back to its senses, compromised, and carried on following each crisis. The crises created ongoing dialogue, "A dialogue that constantly builds the identity of each party and contributes to negotiations over the quality of joint and equal life of Arabs and Jews, in the current political situation" (Rabah, 2006, p. 11).

There is a great deal of equality in all that relates to division of resources and jobs in the town, when key jobs are divided among Jews and Arabs, or they are taken in rotation. The school and kindergarten are bi-national and bi-lingual. Nonetheless, after all, Arabs are the ones who compromise and make concessions in order for joint life to go on. This is observed, for example, through language; the dominant language in town is Hebrew, just like in the state, there is no doubt about the dominance of Hebrew. Arab students master Hebrew completely whereas Jewish students stutter in Arabic (Rabah, 2006).

The school for peace holds initiated meetings between Jews and Arabs from Israel in Nave Shalom- meetings of students, teachers and education crews, and meetings for the wide public. They also organize activities for Jews and Arabs separately, and over the last years they have been organizing meetings for Israeli Jews and Palestinians from the West Bank. The School for Peace is administered by a Jew and an Arab in rotation and it comprises about 30 facilitators. About 25,000 youth and adults have participated in the various activities over the years (Rabah, 2006).

Out of the extensive experience gained in the subject, only after the Arab group gains strength and removes the dust of inferiority feelings and the internalized oppression could it help Jews break free from being oppressors and only then a more true and equal dialogue could develop between the groups. This is a process that is accompanied by a great deal of pain, because it is associated with separation from a familiar and well known situation, from a stable and clear reality, no matter how appalling, it embraces, however, hope for a better future. "If the encounter can teach us about reality, as we believe, then the strengthening of the Palestinian minority and the restoration of its national identity, not only do not constitute a threat on Jews but also are the safe way to healthier relations between the two nations" (Rabah, 2006, p. 13). The question that is frequently repeated is about the results of these meetings and about the extent they influence reality. The answer to this question depends on the goal set by the organizers of the meetings. Mostly, the goal of the meetings between Arabs and Jews is to draw them together, to break stereotypes. Some even view them as the solution or an act of a savior from the painful reality in which we live.

Kahanov (2002) stated that following the meetings between Jews and Arabs he realized that no common world was created between them, but that some progress and compromise processes occurred between the Arab and Jewish participants. Halabi (2006) and others identified a number of stages in the process of dialogue: The probing stage at which the Arab group

becomes assertive and the Jewish group becomes defensive; the second stage at which they get to an impasse, the Jewish group claims responsibility and accepts that it is the dominating group and a more equal dialogue takes place between the groups. This way, the dialogue moves from an arrogant discourse to an inclusive and equal discourse.

Integrating Arab and Jewish Students at the University of Tel Aviv

In 1990 an annual class was opened for both Jewish and Arab students in the department of social psychology at the University of Tel Aviv. Students from the school for peace in Neve Shalom and students from the department of psychology and other departments of humanities participated in the class. The goal was to involve an equal number of Arab and Jewish students. The first part of the class is experiential, through trying the joint meeting, and two facilitators teach it, one is Arab and the other is Jewish. The second part embraces theoretical lectures on processes that take place within groups, and on the significance of conflicts that may form in the meetings. The participants are welcome to "discuss any issue that interests or bothers them regarding the Jewish-Arab conflict. The interventions of the facilitators are meant to point out and sharpen the processes that occur between the two groups. The discussion runs mostly in a bi-national forum. […] the theoretical part includes the following lectures: conflict- concepts, terms and models; stages in the group process; personal and social identity; stereotypes; cognitive schemas of conflicts; theories on the development of ethnic identity" (Halabi, Zonenstein, & Fredman, 2006).

Similar classes were opened in 1994 at the University of Ben Gurion in Be'er Sheva; in 1996 at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; and in 1997 at the University of Haifa.

The class at the University of Tel Aviv included 16 students, half of them were Arabs and the other half were Jews. Six of the Jewish participants studies in the department of psychology, one was from the excellence program, and one was from the law department.

Four of the Arab participants studies social work, two of them were from the law department, and one from the psychology department. The group met throughout the whole academic year.

The meetings brought to interactions between the Arab and the Jewish identities and witnessed ups and downs. Arabs fully expressed their identity and viewed the conflict in the group as a tool to change reality. They openly expressed their sense of inequality and their difficulty to identify with the state. The focus of the discourse in the group was the change of the definition of the state from a Jewish democratic state to a state for all its citizens, in order to enable Arabs to be included in it (Halabi, 2006, pp. 115-118).

Is an Arab University Needed in Israel?

Despite the tremendous contribution of integration of Jewish and Arab students, as presented in the current article, one has to consider all the barriers, difficulties, and obstacles that Arab students face, especially female students when they pursue higher education in Israel. Over the past decades universities, colleges and higher education institutes were added to the national education system. However, in none of these institutes lecturers teach in Arabic.

As mentioned earlier, a great number of Arab students pursue higher education abroad, especially in universities in Jordan. Their number reached 5,400 in the academic year 2008-2009. The rate of Arab students seeking higher education abroad has been increasing, especially that of Arab female students (Arar & Haj-Yahia, 2011).

An appropriate and possible solution for easing the hardships of Arab students and for extending accessibility to higher education would be to establish An Arab university in Israel.

The claim to establish an Arab university in Israel was raised for the first time at the end of the 1970s, over 40 years ago. Ever since then this claim was raised many times, and in some cities, such as Nazareth, there were attempts to establish one. However, these attempts failed. Not all the Arab public were united on this idea and nobody was ready to exert efforts to make it come true. Nonetheless, politicians, scholars, and public figures stressed the expected contribution of an Arab university to advancing the status of the Arab community and to facilitating its integration in the state of Israel. In contrast, some opposed the idea, as they feared that such a project would harm the integration and progress of Arabs, citizens of Israel, and would bring to their withdrawal (Farah, 1997).

Summary

The current study addressed the special value of obtaining higher education in a democratic regime, as it provides personal and collective prestige and advances social and financial mobility. Moreover, the current study addressed the possibility of integrating Arab and Jewish students in colleges in Israel (Ali, 2011). It investigated the contribution of integrating students from diverse cultures to reducing gaps in the community and to accurate perception of the other.

The findings showed the following: 1. A positive correlation exists between the extent of favoring integrated classes and the contribution of integrating multicultural students to reducing gaps in society; 2. A positive correlation exists between the extent of favoring integrated classes and perceiving the contribution of integrating multicultural students to accepting the other.

The contribution and the significance of education for peace was discussed. Education for peace has an immense value in the Israeli being, as it promotes tolerance, violence prevention, and dialogue. Education for peace leads learners to a holistic perception of life in the Israeli society. This perception is supposed to contribute to supporting and strengthening the important values in society. Moreover, the program helps in developing thinking and tolerance, relating to expected hardships in co-existence, and dealing with these hardships through knowledge and deep acquaintance with the Jewish society in Israel (Solomon, 2007).

Moreover, people who attempt to pursue higher education in countries with a democratic regime expect and are entitled to equality and a long line of rights, including the right and the possibility for equal opportunities at work, in the education system, in choosing their place of residence, and in society at all (Awad, 2008).

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