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SISTEMUL EDUCAȚIONAL DIN ISRAEL: TRANSFORMĂRI ÎN SOCIETATEA ARABĂ

Jomana KHALAILA[93]

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Rezumat: *Această lucrare descrie transformarea pe care o suferă sistemul de educație al minorităților arabe în Israel, inclusiv caracteristicile sociale, reglementările și sistemul educațional. Este de remarcat faptul că educația bilingvă are rezultate mai bune, în special în domeniile abilităților sociale, decât alte subsisteme educaționale. Deși au existat schimbări pozitive în ceea ce privește conducerea, finanțarea și reformele politicilor, rămân provocări semnificative, în special în ceea ce privește identitatea, controlul curriculum-ului și egalitatea de șanse.*

Cuvinte cheie: societate araba, transformare socială, educație bilingvă, curriculum.

EDUCATION SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION IN ARAB SOCIETY IN ISRAEL

Abstract: *This paper describes transformation that education system of Arab minorities undergoes in Israel, including social, regulations and education system characteristics. It is notable that Bilingual education has better outcomes, especially in the social skills' domains, than other education sub-systems. While there have been positive changes in leadership, funding, and policy reforms, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding identity, curriculum control, and equal opportunities.*

Keywords: Arab society; social transformation; bilingual education; curriculum.

Introduction

Arab society in Israel is going through significant changes, a transformation from a tradition agrarian society to one that is influenced by modernization. Such changes impact the lives of all Arabs at all ages, especially adolescents who are yet to be aware of own traditional identity and way of life, only to have to face modernity and the drastic changes that brings along with it. Arabs in Israel have to face the never-ending challenges of

93 Pedagogical counselor, Israel, PhD student of Ion Creanga Unviersity, jomana_kh_1988@hotmail.com .

being an ethnic minority living along a hostile ethnic majority. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has an immediate impact on the lives of the local Arabs in Israel, especially the young and adolescents among them.

Materials and methods of research

The authors of this papers studies the existing transformation in Arab society in Israel, especially in the field of education. They used the existing official data by CBS[94] and other sources.

Social transformation of Arab minority in Israel. One of the great challenges that face the Arab adolescent is the transformation of the traditional society into a modern one. Such change brings about completely new dimensions that all members of the society have to deal with. Modernization is an encompassing process of massive social changes that, once set in motion, tends to penetrate all domains of life, from economic activities to social life to political institutions, in a self-reinforcing process. Modernization brings an intense awareness of change and innovation, linked with the idea that human societies are progressing (Inglehart and Welzel, 2007)[95].

Several studies addressed the impact of these changes on Arab adolescents in Israel. Ben-Ari & Azaiza (1998)[96] explored Arab adolescents' commitments to their own self-development, their family, their extended family, the Arab people, and their village. The findings reflect the unique situation of Arab adolescents living in Israel. The polarity found between individualistic and collectivistic ideas, in terms of commitment, illustrates the cultural transformation that Arab society in Israel is currently undergoing. Considering the fact that adolescents experience great deal of confusion establishing their own identity, the cultural and social transformation greatly impact the adolescent's wellbeing.

Additional factors that negatively influence adolescent's overall wellbeing is the fact that Arabs in Israel are a non-assimilated minority, mainly due to the continuing state of conflict between Israel and the Arab world, which has placed them in the status of a hostile minority outside the nati-

94 *CBS (Central Bureau of Statistic*). Higher education in Israel. [quoted 13.03.2023]. Available at: http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/doclib/2022/331/06_22_331t1.pdf (Hebrew)

95 Inglehart, R., and Welzel, C. (2007). Modernization. In book: Encyclopedia of Sociology (pp.3071-3078). Edition 1, Publisher: Blackwell

96 BEN-ARI, Adital Tirosh; AZAIZA, Faisal. Commitment among Arab adolescents in Israel. *The Journal of social psychology*, 1998, vol.138.5, pp.655-660. ISSN 0022-4545

onal consensus[97].

According to Hofman, Beit-Hallahmi, and Hertz-Lazarowitz, (1982)[98] the influence of the political environment must also be taken into account when addressing the wellbeing of the Arab adolescent, as well as most of the Arab population. The Arab population is affected by the internal political upheavals in Israel and by crises in Israeli-Palestinian relations. The Israel Survey of Mental Health among Adolescents (ISMEHA) reported higher rates of internalizing and lower rates of externalizing disorders among Israeli Arab compared to Jewish adolescents (Farbstein, et al., 2010)[99].

Several studies had previously suggested that teaching and implementing programs of life skills should provide adolescents the needed assistance, guidance, and opportunities to a better and healthier way of life. Utilizing life skills interventions provide Adolescent the opportunity to strengthen their mental self, their communication abilities, their assertiveness, and their mental and emotional efficacy, traits that are essential for a proper and healthy growing into adulthood.

Education system of Arab society in Israel

The education system in the Arab society in Israel has undergone significant transformations over the years. These changes have been driven by political, social, and economic factors, as well as efforts to improve educational outcomes and address long-standing inequalities. Here are some key aspects of this transformation

1. Historical Context and Challenges

- Arab schools in Israel have historically faced systemic discrimination in terms of funding, infrastructure, and resources compared to Jewish schools.
- The curriculum has been largely controlled by Israeli authorities, leading to tensions regarding the representation of Palestinian identity, his-

97 Daeem, R., Mansbach-Kleinfeld, I., Farbstein, I. *et al.* Correlates of mental disorders among minority Arab adolescents in Israel: results from the Galilee Study. *Isr J Health Policy Res* **8**, 14 (2019). https://doi.org/10.1186/s13584-018-0281-5

98 Hofman, J. E., Beit-Hallahmi, B., & Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (1982). Self-concept of Jewish and Arab adolescents in Israel. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *43*(4), 786.

99 Farbstein I, Mansbach-Kleinfeld I, Levinson D, Goodman R, Levav I, Vograft I, Kanaaneh R, Ponizovsky A, Brent D, Apter A. Prevalence and correlates of mental disorders in Israeli adolescents: results from a national mental health survey. J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2010;51:630–9

tory, and culture.

- Socioeconomic disparities have impacted student performance and access to higher education and employment opportunities.

Wilkinson and Pickett's study[100] demonstrates the insight that high inequality eroded trust in society and cause many negative effects, from high morbidity to violence and crime. Inequality may bring the weaker classes – those who suffer of lack of economic and politic resources –to be perceived along time as inferior, to themselves and to others. Socio-economic gaps that pass from generation to generation, may cause injustices and moods that will lead to systemic failure in everything related to the possibility that the weak in society will be able to realize better chances of life. In Israel the relation tissue between the Jewish majority and the Arab minority is characterized in increasing tensions and in exclusion and negation relations[101], worsening of inequality may also cause a crisis and violence and create a threat upon the democratic character of the country.

2. The climate and academic atmosphere in schools

The issue of academic atmosphere in schools is not less important than the issue of academic achievements and it also gets a lot of attention by the media. This attention mostly focuses on difficult cases of violence between students and between students and teachers. However, the questionnaires distributed to students and teachers in the MEIZAV exams allow to see the situation beyond hard and exceptional cases and focus the attention on continuing trends (although in some of the cases the improvement does not bring to a satisfactory status)[102]. There is a constant rise in positive reports about general positive students' feeling towards school. There is a relatively stable rate of 70% of teachers reporting on satisfaction. There is an improvement in the relationship between teachers and students in all education levels in Jewish and Arab education, except for in Arab education high school.

1. There is a decrease in the rate of students reporting lack of protection

100 Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better. London: Allen Lane. 2009. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15700763.2011.577928

101 Agbaria A.K. and Mustafa M. Two states for three peoples: the 'Palestinian-Israeli' in the Future Vision Documents of the Palestinians in Israel. Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies. 2012. Volume 35, Issue 4. P. 718-736

102 SIROTA, Julia; HAJAJRA, Mohamed. Equality situation in education in Israel. *Eco-SoEn*, 2018, 1-2: 128-134.

sense (except for 10th – 11th grades), and there is also a slight decrease in the rate of 5th – 6th grades students reporting about involvement in violence events.

2. There is a decrease in the rate of teachers reporting lack of protection sense.

3. Sirota and Hajajra[103] identified an improvement in proper behavior in classes in all age classes and the two population groups (except for stability in 10th – 11th grades in Arab education). This data was verified and confirmed in another big research (national authority on measuring and evaluation, 2014), which was dedicated to monitoring violence phenomenon. This research included over 20,000 respondents in elementary, junior high and high education, and the primary conclusions were that between 2009 and 2013 there was an improvement in most indices measured (i.e. there was a decrease in reports of violence) and no deterioration in any of the indices. The increase in the rate of students reporting about: extreme violence, social violence, violence by the staff and towards the staff, sexual violence, violence in transportation and drinking alcohol. This trend concerned all age groups, but especially prominent in elementary education – where the violence level is the higher, in the past and in the present. In junior high there were also an improvement and in high school there was an improvement in some of the indices and stability in other indices. The improvement was in Jewish and Arab schools but was especially prominent in Arab schools.

3. Policy Reforms and Structural Changes

- **Increased Budget Allocation**: In recent years, the Israeli government has allocated more resources to Arab schools, focusing on infrastructure, teacher training, and technological improvements.
- **Bilingual and Integrated Schools**: Some initiatives, such as bilingual schools and shared education programs, aim to foster coexistence between Arab and Jewish students.

Bilingual and integrated schools in Israel are an important initiative aimed at fostering coexistence between Arab and Jewish students. These schools provide a shared learning environment where students from both communities study together, often in both Hebrew and Arabic, with a curriculum that emphasizes mutual respect, cultural understanding, and dialogue.

103 SIROTA, Julia; HAJAJRA, Mohamed. Equality situation in education in Israel. *Eco-SoEn*, 2018, 1-2: 128-134.

Key Aspects of Bilingual and Integrated Schools:

- Language and Curriculum – Instruction is often in both Hebrew and Arabic, ensuring linguistic and cultural representation. Some schools follow a dual-language immersion model where both languages are used equally.
- Coexistence and Dialogue – These schools promote interaction and understanding between Jewish and Arab students through joint activities, discussions, and a curriculum that includes narratives from both communities.
- Shared Education Programs – Beyond fully integrated schools, some programs facilitate collaboration between separate Jewish and Arab schools, bringing students together for joint learning activities, cultural exchanges, and special projects.
- Challenges and Impact – While these initiatives have shown success in reducing stereotypes and fostering friendships, they face challenges such as political tensions, parental concerns, and funding limitations.
- Notable Examples – Schools like the Hand in Hand network have successfully implemented bilingual education, proving that such initiatives can positively impact social cohesion.

The Israeli society is both multilingual and multicultural, with different social identities stemming from Jewish majority population, and an Arab minority, both engaged with complex lingual issues, which are also expressed in the education system. Considering that multilingual competence is inherently linked to diversified social contexts, KHALAILA et.al[104] explore the dynamic of social skills in pupils and found out that Bilingual schools in Israel grant their pupils nest social skills.

4. Higher Education Access

Efforts to increase Arab students' participation in Israeli universities have included scholarship programs and preparatory courses. The Arab sector in Israel is quite different from the Jewish majority. The gap in the knowledge level begins already in a high school: in 2004 only 82% of Arab young men and women aged 17 kept on visiting a school, when in the Jewish sector this number is 92%. At the same time, the number of Arab students of high education institutions is rapidly growing. In 1991, after

104 KHALAILA, Mahmood; SIROTA, Julia; BACIU, Elena-Loreni. The Progress of Social Skills among Israeli Primary School Pupils during Their First Year of Study of English as a Foreign Language. *Social Work Review/Revista de Asistenta Sociala*, 2022, 3.

graduating a school, only 10.7% of Arabs got accepted in higher education. In 2002, their proportion grew up to 18.8%[105]. In 2021/22, the proportion of Arabs in BA degree was 20%[106]. In the beginning of 90-s, there were 5,000 Arab students in all the higher education institutions in Israel. In 2005 this number was three times bigger. Moreover, the most outstanding results were noticed in the Arab females sector. Lots of academic colleges were open at the periphery region at this time, which made the higher academic education much more available, especially for women at the Arab sector[107]. A proportion of high education young graduates, by population group is presented in Appendix 5.

Proportion of Arabs aged 20-24 is about 20% of the Israeli population of this age, and Table 1 presents the growth of all the degrees' Arab students. Between 2016/2017 and 2021/2022 a percentage of Arab students grew up in all the disciplines: in BA degree – from 16.3% to 20%, in MA degree- from 13% to 17%, and in PhD- from 6.2% to 8.3%, respectively[108]. In 2021/2022, a number of Orthodox students in Higher education institutions was 4.3%, in BA degree – 4.8% and 6.9% of all the new students. In 2021/2022, 26.4% of the BA students were from rich sectors of the population, among MA students this percentage is higher (31.8%), and among PhD student it is higher (42.7%)[109].

105KRIL, Z., GEVA, A., ALONI Z. *Not all the degrees are born equal – Investigation of education premium to the salary, as a function of a field of studies*. 2016. Ministry of Finance, Economic department paper 52. [quoted 07.02.2019]. Available at: http://mof.gov.il/ChiefEcon/EconomyAndResearch/ArticlesSet/Article_27122016.pdf (Hebrew)

106 *CBS (Central Bureau of Statistic*). Higher education in Israel. [quoted 13.03.2023]. Available at: http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/doclib/2022/331/06_22_331t1.pdf (Hebrew

107AWADA, S. Israeli education market. In: *Вестник*. Казахстан: Костанайский государственный педагогический институт, 2016, №4, p.3-7. ISBN 1684-9310.

108 *CBS (Central Bureau of Statistic*). Higher education in Israel. [quoted 13.03.2023]. Available at: http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/doclib/2022/331/06_22_331t1.pdf (Hebrew)

109 Ibidem. *CBS (Central Bureau of Statistic*). Higher education in Israel. [quoted 13.03.2023]. Available at: http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cbs.

Table 1. Percentage of Arabs in the BA, MA and PhD students' population over years[110]

Degree/year	BA	MA	PhD
2016/17	16.3	13.0	6.2
2017/18	17.2	13.9	6.6
2018/19	18.1	14.6	7.0
2019/20	19.2	14.6	7.2
2020/21	19.2	15.5	8.0
2021/22	20.0	17.0	8.3

The program of Higher education committee to get higher education more available to minorities is definitely successive, since the proportion of Arabs in the Israeli BA degree students' population of 2021/22 it close to Arabs' part in the Israeli population (25%) (Appendix 6). Fields of study preferable by Arabs are mostly teaching and pro-medical professions[111].

5. Leadership and School Governance

- The role of **school principals** has become more significant in shaping school culture, improving teacher commitment, and fostering innovation.
- There is an increasing push for **transformational leadership** in Arab schools, where principals encourage teamwork, skill development, and alternative assessment methods to enhance learning outcomes.
- Community involvement, particularly from **parents and local organizations**, has been recognized as a key factor in improving school performance.

4. Curriculum Development and Identity

- The Arab education system still struggles with **curriculum autonomy**, as many Palestinian citizens of Israel seek a curriculum that better reflects their national and cultural identity.
- There have been calls for incorporating **Palestinian history, literature,**

gov.il/he/mediarelease/doclib/2022/331/06_22_331t1.pdf (Hebrew)

110 Ibidem. *CBS (Central Bureau of Statistic*). Higher education in Israel. [quoted 13.03.2023]. Available at: http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/doclib/2022/331/06_22_331t1.pdf (Hebrew)

111 Ibidem. *CBS (Central Bureau of Statistic*). Higher education in Israel. [quoted 13.03.2023].http://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.cbs.gov.il/he/mediarelease/doclib/2022/331/06_22_331t1.pdf (Hebrew)

and heritage into the curriculum while balancing the requirements of the Israeli education system.

5. The Role of Technology and Innovation

- Digital transformation has played a role in improving education quality, especially in underfunded Arab schools.
- STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) programs have been promoted to enhance employment prospects for Arab students[112].

6. Future Directions and Challenges

- **Bridging the Achievement Gap**: Despite improvements, Arab students still face disparities in standardized test scores and university admission rates.
- **Employment and Workforce Integration**: Strengthening vocational education and career counseling can help Arab graduates integrate into Israel's job market more effectively.
- **Educational Autonomy**: There are ongoing discussions about granting Arab schools more control over their curriculum and administrative decisions.

Conclusion

The transformation of the education system in the Arab society in Israel is a complex process influenced by political, social, and economic factors. While there have been positive changes in leadership, funding, and policy reforms, significant challenges remain, particularly regarding identity, curriculum control, and equal opportunities. Continued investment, policy adjustments, and community engagement will be crucial for sustainable and equitable improvements.

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112 BREINER, Jonathan M., et al. What is STEM? A discussion about conceptions of STEM in education and partnerships. *School science and mathematics*, 2012, 112.1: 3-11.

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