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Education for multiculturalism in a master's degree program in Policy and Administration in Education: Comparing Jewish and Arab students in Israel

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Abstract: The research investigated whether there is a correlation between participation in a course entitled "Diversity and multiculturalism in the global era" as perceived by Jewish and Arab students in Israel and a change in the students' attitudes and behaviors and their performance of activities in a multicultural context in the education field. The course was part of a master's degree program in Policy and Administration in Education in an academic college in central Israel. Pre-course and post-course questionnaires were administered to the course participants. Participants were 528 students; 177 responded to the pre-course questionnaire and 351 responded to the post-course questionnaire. The research findings indicated a direct association between participation in the course and activities conducted in the education field. In addition, students' acquisition of knowledge on multiculturalism mediated the association between participation in the course and performance of multicultural activities in the education field. Differences were found between Jewish and Arab students' reports: Jews reported a multicultural academic atmosphere significantly more than Arabs. Contrastingly, Arab students gave significantly higher grades than Jewish students to reciprocal relations between the groups in the college and reported a more positive change in their attitudes towards the other group and towards multiculturalism and were more convinced that the course contributed to their multicultural thinking. These findings have theoretical and practical implications that can inform policymakers planning education for multiculturalism as a permanent component in academic programs, while responding to different sectors' cultural uniqueness to promote equality between them.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, education for multiculturalism, contact theory, Jews and Arabs, changing attitudes.

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Introduction

Living in a pluralistic society in which ethnically, nationally and religiously different groups sometimes live in conflict with one another, poses a great challenge for higher education institutions in the 21st century. Higher education institutions are confronted with cultivating students' multicultural and intercultural skills, in such a way that students will be adequately prepared for the labor market. Higher education institutions constitute a social venue where students from different cultures meet (Lev Ari & Mula, 2016), and this environment can play an important role in promoting social change. By preparing culturally-competent professionals who are able to critically engage in socially diverse topics, social change can take place (Saleem, 2017; Wilson, 2018).

One way to advance this goal is to plan and implement courses into the academic institution's learning programs that specifically teach students of diverse backgrounds about multiculturalism (Furcsa, 2009). Such courses should be based on creative, effective pedagogy, and they should combine content with process to develop reflective thinking and problem-solving skills (Nieto & Bode, 2012), improve students' critical thinking skills, and promote tolerant values and attitudes (Aslan & Aybek, 2020).

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Israeli society consists of a mosaic of cultures divided by many schisms. Israeli democracy is not multicultural, rather it prioritizes Jewish nationalism (Perry, 2007). The "other," recognized by all Jewish sub-cultures, is the Arab (Yona & Shenhav, 2005). The differences between Israeli Arab and Jewish citizens are expressed through different religions, languages, residential environments, cultural characteristics and national aspirations (Al-Haj, 2003).

The education system encourages separate education for different sectors of the Jewish society, leading students to have almost no contact with other sectors of the population. The school system for the Arab minority is also completely separate. However, this segregation in the formal education stages has been gradually changing over the last two decades; with the development of bilingual schools, a limited number of Arab students have integrated into Jewish schools at a slow, but growing rate (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2017). The Ministry of Education has enacted policy efforts to integrate Arab teachers into Jewish schools and Jewish teachers into Arab schools. Meanwhile, some Jewish and Arab school principals manage shared spaces (Shwed et al., 2014). These changes require higher education institutions to train their graduates to deal with this complex reality, and one way is by requiring students to take multicultural courses. The present study significantly contributes to knowledge that can be utilized for advancing this policy further.

The lack of multiculturalism is also felt in institutions of higher education (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2014), in which there is no emphasis on preparing and empowering graduates to cope with the challenges involved in the reality of a multicultural state. These challenges continue to exist because of the lack of an intentional policy from the Higher Education Council to assist Israeli academic institutions in promoting multiculturalism. Even when education for multiculturalism does exist, it is implemented on a voluntary basis in academic institutions, rather than as a result of an intentional national policy. According to several recent studies conducted in Israel, students studying in higher education institutions that train teachers are not provided with courses that prepare them for teaching in multicultural classes, nor for fostering a multicultural approach in their students that would equip them with tools to navigate adult life in a multicultural society (Nahhas, 2020).

Nevertheless, this phenomenon has begun to change in the last decade. The Higher Education Council and Israel's President, Reuven Rivlin,[†] have encouraged higher education institutions to promote education for multiculturalism as part of different learning programs. This encouragement has led the management of one private college in Israel to introduce a core course in multiculturalism as part of its master's degree program in Policy and Administration in Education, a course in which both Jewish and Arab students participate, and which aims to equip the future pedagogic leadership of the Israeli education system with the necessary knowledge and skills.

The research described here investigated the contribution of this course, as perceived by participants, in changing students' behaviors and performance of activities in a multicultural context[‡] within the education field. The study further compared the perceptions of Jewish and Arab students. In other words, the research investigated students' consideration of the course as a tool to empower them to conduct multicultural-promoting activities in educational settings.

To the best of our knowledge, these associations have not been examined previously, in the context of the Israeli education system, nor have the differences between Jewish and Arab students been evaluated.

Literature Review

Multiculturalism and education for multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is an elusive term, which has been defined differently across different contexts (Triandafyllidou et al., 2012). According to Stolle et al. (2016), multiculturalism relates to the presence of multiple ethno-cultural communities in a society, and the ways in which these communities need to interact. The term is additionally used as an adjective in three situations: (1) when describing a society, multiculturalism relates to ethnic, religious and/or cultural heterogeneity of a society; (2) when describing an ideological approach, multiculturalism represents recognition and respect for cultural differences; (3) when describing a set of policies, multiculturalism refers to the recognition of cultural diversity and to the goal of removing obstacles to the integration of different cultures (Kymlicka & Banting, 2006). Multiculturalism is achieved when demographic, socio-political and psychological factors come together to ensure that the cultures of different groups are encouraged and positive intergroup relations are constructed (Berry, 2006; Sibley & Ward, 2013).

Nevertheless, multiculturalism has different implications for groups with differing statuses (Plaut et al., 2011). Multiculturalism is typically perceived as effective for increasing the recognition of, and ensuring equality for, ethnic minorities (Guimond et al., 2014). To achieve these goals, members of the majority group must relinquish some of their power and status, but they are likely to view this as a threat to their status quo (Verkuyten, 2006). For minority group members, multiculturalism offers the possibility of retaining their culture (including language, symbols, norms and

[†] Shared Israeli hope – Vision or dream <https://www.israeli-hope.gov.il/academy>.

[‡] In mixed classes of Jews and Arabs in schools or other educational settings.

traditions), as well as an opportunity for attaining a higher status in society. However, members of a majority group may view ethnic minorities' desire to maintain their culture as a threat to their own cultural dominance, group identity and social status.

Accepting diversity as a way of life is only possible if education for multiculturalism is prioritized (Erbaş, 2019). Education for multiculturalism for students of various minority and majority cultural and ethnic groups has gradually gained popularity in the political, social and educational agendas of various world states, due primarily to dynamic global changes. This increase in popularity creates difficult challenges for schools and education systems (Walker, 2004). Since the 1960s, social developments in the United States, expressions of racism and the underachievement of minority groups led to a rethinking of educational approaches, as well as the development of education for multiculturalism to enable successful coexistence of different ethnic and national groups. More recently, there has been growing awareness of the contributions of diversity to society and an understanding that the suppression of diversity is harmful to society. This awareness has led to a situation in which the voices of women, religious and ethnic minorities, those in the lower social strata and the disabled demand to be heard and respected. Education for multiculturalism prepares learners to understand and meet these expressed needs (Richardson & Villenas, 2000).

Different approaches to education to multiculturalism have been developed. The first was proposed by Banks (1995), who viewed multiculturalism as a concept or movement for educational change, one which should cultivate the knowledge, tools and values that students need to be able to achieve equality and social justice, and to function in an optimal manner in their communities, nation state and global reality. Banks (1997) also included the need to improve students' academic achievements by adapting the learning system to different cultural contexts, and developing students' positive attitudes toward different cultural groups. Later, Banks and McGee Banks (2001) added that education for multiculturalism should be based on social action and discussions on various issues of social inequality evident in the immediate environment. They further noted that this work should consist of five dimensions: (1) integration of learning content related to matters of different cultures; (2) a formative process and construction of knowledge by the teacher in the classroom; (3) attempts to reduce prejudices using various teaching materials; (4) egalitarian, culturally-appropriate pedagogy aimed at helping each learner improve their academic achievements; and (5) an empowering school culture based on reciprocal, egalitarian relations between teachers and students.

Gay (1995) indicated that education for multiculturalism should involve a system of beliefs and explanations that recognize the importance of ethnic and cultural diversity as it is reflected in lifestyle design, social experiences, and personal identities. Equal educational opportunities should be provided, such that different individuals, groups, and nations receive adequate and comparable education. Developing these ideas further, Nieto (1992) indicated that education for multiculturalism necessitates a fundamental change in education, consisting of the acceptance of pluralism, the use of appropriate curricula and methods, and an improvement in student-teacher relationships. Teachers and the community need to adopt a critical pedagogical approach to stimulate changes in knowledge and educational activities, and promote principles of social justice.

Multiculturalism and education for multiculturalism in Israel

Israel's population in 2019 was composed of 74.1% Jews and 21.0% Arabs, and the remaining population was comprised of diverse small groups (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2020). In most life domains, there is an evident separation of Jews from Arabs; most Jews and Arabs live, work and study within their own community's localities, workplaces and schools. It is only in the universities and some colleges (and workplaces) that Jews and Arabs regularly interact (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2014; Masry-Herzallah & Razin, 2014). Israel's education policies oblige Arab students in the Arab education system to learn about the "other," i.e. the Jews. In elementary schools, Arab students engage in compulsory studies in Hebrew and Jewish history and literature, in which they learn that they are defined as a minority in the Jewish majority state. Contrastingly, Jewish students are not obliged to learn Arabic nor to learn about Palestinian and Arab religions, languages, or history.

Nevertheless, this segregation has been gradually changing over the last two decades and some more integrative spaces have formed, leading to a slight reduction in the separation of Arab and Jewish students across all school education stages. For example, a number of bilingual schools were created, which absorb both Jewish and Arab students aiming to educate themselves about equal coexistence between the two national groups (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2017; Bekerman, 2004). This approach is gradually growing in popularity and the number of bilingual schools and students is increasing. Similarly, a limited number of Arab students have integrated into Jewish schools, at a slow but growing rate. Arab teachers teach in Jewish schools, some Jewish teachers teach in Arab schools, and some Jewish and Arab school principals manage shared spaces (Shwed et al., 2014). These first buds of integration in the Israeli education system are not the result of an intentional policy set by the education system (Shwed et al., 2014), rather they have developed from a grassroots movement of students' parents and from initiatives of civil social organizations. For this trend to continue and succeed, higher education institutions in Israel must train a future managerial cadre to promote education for multiculturalism, as well as equip future principals with an educational toolbox suitable to include, support and respect students of diverse cultural backgrounds. The present study aims to contribute to the advancement of these goals by

developing models for multicultural education and providing practical tools for effective and culturally-sensitive multicultural leadership education.

Education for multiculturalism in higher education institutions

As already noted, higher education institutions provide a natural meeting place for people from different groups (Valentine, 2008). Banks (1994) argued that the key to multicultural education is to provide help to students for developing their abilities to communicate and interact with people across different cultures. Direct experiences with prejudices, one's first cross-cultural experience, and learning about the symbols and characteristics of other ethnic cultures can help individuals in getting to know and understanding the culture of the "other." According to Banks, education for multiculturalism does not only involve familiarization with the other culture, but it also necessitates the shaping of an environment that reflects cultural diversity, including the enactment of structural changes. The academic space can promote contact among students from different cultures; sharing experiences in this space enables individuals to expand their knowledge concerning different groups and may subsequently increase their cultural openness (Chang, 2005; Gurin et al., 2002; Saleem, 2017). However, these intercultural encounters may also engender a sense of inferiority among minority group members (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012).

In line with the principles of contact theory (Allport, 1954), meetings between members of groups who are engaged in continuous national and religious disputes, can help to reduce prejudices and facilitate cooperation between them. To explain this dynamic, Allport listed several positive factors which, if they existed, would allow for the reduction of prejudices in intercultural encounters, including: a similar socio-economic status of the groups, continuous interpersonal interactions between individuals from both groups, shared or similar goals and interests, cooperation between the groups in a situation of mutual dependence, institutional and social support for the meetings, and norms that support equality.

One way to encourage intercultural contact between students in academia is to plan and conduct courses intended specifically to promote education for multiculturalism. These courses necessitate communication between classmates from different cultures and help them to increase their cultural awareness, enabling them to adopt strategies to cope with different viewpoints (Furcsa, 2009). In courses in which students work on multicultural assignments together, they are able to witness the contributions of their culturally-diverse classmates, as an emphasis is placed on the different social practices, festivals, etc., of each culture. It is argued that even in cases of confrontation, these intercultural meetings may lead to positive interpersonal relations (Palmer, 1987) and that, especially among majority group members, intercultural meetings that take place in an academic setting help to decrease stereotypes and prejudices (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000). Other studies have shown how essential it is to introduce curricula with multicultural content. For example, Milner and Smithy (2003) found that a teacher training program that included education for multiculturalism influenced teaching in multicultural classes, and improved the participating student-teachers' approach to multiculturalism.

In Israel, this phenomenon developed with the growth of the "coexistence sector" introduced by non-profit institutions (NGOs). Since the 1980s, various programs have been implemented in teacher education institutions to promote coexistence between Jews and Arabs (Bar-Tal, 2004). The expansive literature devoted to examining the consequences of meetings between Jews and Arabs in Israel indicates that students develop positive attitudes towards the other and that their prejudices and stereotypes are reduced (Abu-Nimer, 1999); these interactions reinforce students' social commitment and increasing awareness of the "other" (Katz et al., 2007). When dialogues between non-similar groups are conducted within conditions of equal relations, students' abilities to demonstrate sensitivity towards the "other" are strengthened, which consequently helps to advance democratic values (Perry, 2007). Such intercultural meetings are considered a safe environment in which each side can learn about the cultural and political viewpoint of the "other" (Arar & Masry-Herzallah, 2017). Research also indicates that adult students support democratic values and education for multiculturalism, and that courses with multicultural aspects contribute to their personal realization of multiculturalism and cross-cultural competence (Lev Ari & Mula, 2016; Lev Ari & Husisi-Sabek, 2019). Courses on education for multiculturalism have been shown to alter attitudes and behaviors; however, prior studies have not investigated the impact of these courses on the promotion of multicultural education in the field of education nor have they studied their impact on graduate students in educational leadership. The present study aimed to address these gaps in the literature.

A study by Paul-Binyamin and Haj-Yehia (2019) examining different educational models, which promote education for multiculturalism in an Israeli college of education, found that an academic space with a multicultural atmosphere can influence the development of educators' positive perceptions of education for multiculturalism. Successful courses in education for multiculturalism are based on students' shared experiences, equality and recognition of the power relations between the majority and minority. These programs have different levels of influence on Arab students as compared to Jewish students. Studies have shown that in intercultural meetings, which aim to promote education for multiculturalism, Arab students tend to remain silent for a long time (Maoz, 2004). This phenomenon is prevalent in meetings between members of groups from an underprivileged background and those of more well-established groups (Feagin et al., 1996). Additionally, it has been argued that, in contrast to their Jewish counterparts, Arab participants

are not used to engaging in assertive, direct conversation in public (Dwairy, 2004), and that the dominance of the Hebrew language in these meetings situates Arab participants in a structurally inferior position (Amara, 1999). In contrast, another study found that creating a shared space within different academic programs enabled Arab students to develop a sense of empowerment during their time in academia. Further, meeting with "others" during these courses expanded students' theoretical understanding of the concept of multiculturalism, especially among Arab students (Lev Ari & Laron, 2014), further increasing their intercultural competence (Lev Ari & Mula, 2016; Lev Ari & Husisi-Sabek, 2019).

Context and Research Goal

The research aimed to examine the influence of Jewish and Arab students' experiences with intercultural meetings in a course entitled, "Diversity and multiculturalism in the global era," during their master's degree program in Policy and Administration in Education. The following research questions were posed:

1. Which factors influence students' performance of different multicultural activities in academia?
2. Are there differences between Arab and Jewish students in the advancement of multicultural activities in education settings?

Methodology

The course characteristics

The core course began as part of the advanced studies program in education in a college of education established in 2009 in central Israel. The college provides a response to both Jewish and Arab populations. The college's School of Education notes its mission as follows: "The school students' community arrives from all over the country – from Eilat to Kiryat Shmona. Students studying for a master's degree in education represent the many cultures in Israel: secular, religious, ultra-Orthodox, Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs and Druze". One of the goals noted in this statement is to "give a sense of security to minorities."

The course aims to reduce social tension and political radicalization between the different Israeli populations and to improve relations in the two groups between male and female student-teachers in their joint studies (Kaplan et al., 2001). The course was constructed on the principles of Contact Theory as described by Allport (1954) and included weekly three-hour meetings imparting different multicultural theories and also the students' collaborative work, through dialog and debate, division into mixed groups and presentation of their collaborative products in the class. Additionally, the students told their personal stories as they reflected their cultures to the entire class or within small groups. Guest lecturers from different cultures were invited to the course and students were asked to complete collaborative assignments during the course. The course sessions offered a unique communication channel enabling participants from both groups to meet, debate and examine controversial educational-political issues in an environment that educates for democratic values. The students, who had chosen to study program in Policy and Administration in Education were all educators aspiring to undertake senior positions in the education system. Presenting different narratives, learning from their peers, learning new tools to cope with those issues and how to apply them, prepared them as agents for socialization and multicultural education in the public education field (Funk & Willits, 1987). The course also influenced their socio-political attitudes (Anderson, 2016; Owens, 1992).

Measures

The research adopted a quantitative methodology, using tools to obtain numerical data, breaking down the studied issue into variables and searching for connections between them by surveying correlations. In such a study, questionnaires draw out respondents' attitudes, feelings, opinions, etc. regarding the research context and this data is used to examine correlations between the different variables (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

An attitudes questionnaire developed by Lev Ari and Mula (2016) was adapted for the purposes of the present study. The questionnaire included both closed-ended questions to elicit the student's background data, their previous contact with the other population, knowledge of other groups, perceptions regarding the college climate, attitudes towards multiculturalism and education for multiculturalism, mutual relations between students from different sectors, influences of participation in the multicultural course on their attitudes, and acquisition of knowledge and tools concerning multiculturalism and their training as managers in a multicultural society and their promotion of activities in this important area in the education field.

Internal reliability of the research tools was tested with Cronbach's α . The variable 'meeting with others' was found to be marginally reliable ($\alpha=0.68$), while the other variables were found to have a good internal reliability: 'knowledge of others' ($\alpha=0.84$), 'attitudes towards others and multiculturalism' ($\alpha=0.85$), 'performance of activities in the context of multiculturalism in the education field' ($\alpha=0.82$), 'positive feeling towards the others' ($\alpha=0.83$) and 'negative feeling towards the others' ($\alpha=0.86$).

The research Participants

Participants of the course were educators, subject teachers, homeroom teachers and other role-holders within the education field. All were studying for their master's degree in Policy and Administration in Education. Given their positions within the education system, changes in their attitudes and, even more importantly, in their behaviors would be highly likely to influence their multicultural activity in school and their training as future educational leaders living in a multicultural society.

Respondents were 528 students, of which 177 completed the pre-course questionnaire and 351 completed the post-course questionnaire. Most of the respondents were women (89% pre-course and 80% post-course) and Jews (84% pre-course and 80% post-course, while correspondingly 16% and 20% were Arab). Most participants identified themselves as secular (43% pre-course and 40% post-course) or traditionally religious (36% pre-course and 35% post-course). The mean age of the pre-course participants was 37.73 ($SD = 7.79$) and 39.93 ($SD = 8.15$) for the post-course participants.

The research procedure

The research was conducted from 2017 to 2019 after obtaining the necessary approval from the ethics committee at the author's academic college. A pilot was performed on 35 students to validate the questionnaire. The questionnaire was adapted as needed and a link to the questionnaire, constructed on "Google Form" was sent to the course online site. This questionnaire was administered twice: pre- and post- the students' participation in the course. The first questionnaire was sent to the students a week before the semester began. The purpose of the questionnaire was explained to the students, and they were promised anonymity. At the end of the semester, the questionnaire was administered again (with adaptations necessary to investigate the influence of the course). The students were asked to respond within a month. The questionnaire's purpose was explained again. Data from the students' responses underwent analysis with SPSS software.

Since the pre- and post-course sample sizes were unequal, we employed the Welch's (1947) test when comparing the samples. The Welch's test is considered to be a more reliable analysis when the variances and/or sample sizes of the two samples are unequal, conditions that violate t-test assumptions. We used a conservative approach and additionally employed a Bayesian approach, an alternative to classic hypotheses testing (Rouder et al., 2009). A Bayes factor was calculated, according to the Rouder et al.'s (2009) method. According to this method, when the coefficient ranges from 0.33 – 1, there is weak evidence for rejecting the zero hypothesis (which states that there are no differences between the measurements); when the coefficient ranges from 0.10 – 0.33, there is moderate evidence for rejecting the zero hypothesis; when the coefficient ranges from 0.03 – 0.10, there is strong evidence to reject the zero hypothesis; and when the coefficient falls below 0.03, there is robust evidence to reject the zero hypothesis. When the coefficient is equal to or greater than 1, the zero hypothesis is not rejected. It is important to note that that we tested between-participants comparisons (as opposed to within-participants) because no identifying information was collected from students and therefore, a within-participants analysis was not possible.[§]

In order to examine interactions between timepoint and sector, we also employed the more popular analysis of variance (ANOVA) test and verified its results with a Bayesian approach. Further, to examine our model, according to, imparting knowledge about the second group and about multiculturalism (M1) together with attitudes toward multiculturalism (M2) would mediate the correlation between course participation and activities in a multicultural context in educational settings, we used SPSS'S Process macro (Hayes, 2018). Performance of activities in a multicultural context within educational settings was the primary variable of interest, as well as the outcome variable in the model. As noted, it was hypothesized that a multicultural course (X) would affect the performance of these activities in the educational field (Y), such that after attending the course, participants would report that they performed more multicultural activities in their schools. It was also hypothesized that acquisition of knowledge about the second group and about multiculturalism (M₁), together with attitudes toward multiculturalism (M₂), would mediate the association between course participation and performance of activities in a multicultural context within educational settings (see Figure 1). In other words, it was expected that after students participated in the course, they would acquire knowledge about multiculturalism and would report more positive attitudes towards multiculturalism; in turn, the combination of these two elements would predict students' performance of activities in the educational field.

[§] Although a within-participant approach is often considered preferable (e.g., Montoya, 2019), in light of the researcher's acquaintance with the students, as their course lecturer, it was decided to not collect any identifying details in order to maintain complete anonymity and to allow the students a sense of complete anonymity.

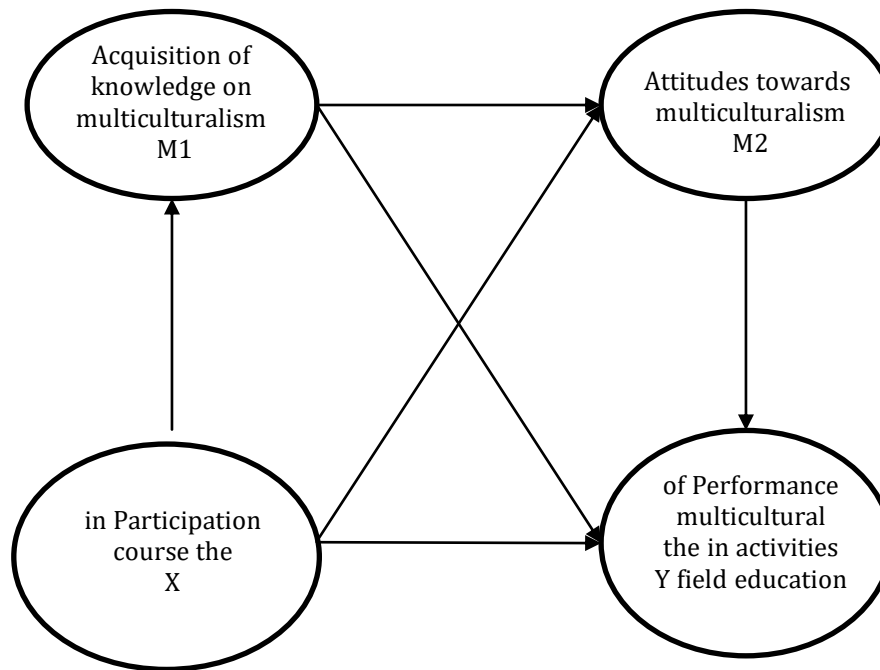


Figure 1. Association between participation in the course and performance of multicultural activities in the education field, as well as the mediating role of attitudes towards multiculturalism and acquisition of knowledge on multiculturalism.

The model shown in Figure 1 was tested using a serial multiple mediation analysis (e.g., Hayes, 2018). This mediation model was chosen because it enabled an examination of the direct and indirect effects, as well as the combined influence of both on the dependent variable. This particular analysis controls for multicollinearity and enables the testing of the exclusive influence of each effect – direct and indirect. Moreover, the model can test the correlation between the mediating variables. In order to calculate the confidence intervals for the coefficients, the bootstrapping technique was employed (using 5,000 bootstrap samples). This technique overcomes the issues of unequal sample sizes and unequal variances that were present in the current study. According to this accepted technique, when the upper and lower ranges of the coefficient do not include zero, the coefficient is considered to be statistically significant (Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Results

A-parametric Welch tests were used to discern differences in the dependent variables between the two time-points (pre- and post- course). Table 1 displays the means for the groups and results of the Welch test that compared them.

Table 1. Pre-course and post-course means for the dependent variables

Variable	Pre-course (n = 172-177)		Post-course (n = 350-351)		F	p	BF
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Meetings with others	2.76	0.87	2.75	0.89	0.09	.93	13.65
Knowledge on others	2.60	0.97	2.92	1.03	12.53	.00	0.04
Attitudes towards others and multiculturalism	3.99	0.72	4.07	0.62	1.53	.22	5.99
Performance of activities in the education field in a multicultural context	3.74	0.98	4.00	0.84	8.67	.00	0.12
Negative feelings towards others	1.32	0.62	1.23	0.54	2.51	.11	3.56
Positive feelings towards others	3.35	0.97	3.77	0.84	24.08	.00	0.000

Note: SD – Standard Deviation; Possible range 1-5; F = results of Welch test, p = significant value; BF = Bayes Factor

The data in Table 1 indicate that several Welch test results were found to be statistically significant and were also supported by the Bayesian test results. It was found that post-course, knowledge concerning members of the other group increased significantly, more activities were performed in the education field in a multicultural context and the students reported far more positive feelings towards the other group. No significant differences were found regarding negative feelings, although there is a trend to reduction of negative feelings towards the other group after the course. No statistically significant differences were found for the variable 'attitudes towards the other group and towards multiculturalism', and for the variable 'meetings with others'. It is noted that no difference was found between the time

of administration of the questionnaires and sector (Arab and Jewish), as determined by a chi-squared test: $\chi^2(1) = 1.13$, $p = .29$.

A series of two-way analyses of variance (ANOVA's) did not find any interactions between sector (Jew/Arab) and time of administration of the questionnaires (before/after the course), but main effects were found. Beyond the main effect of the time of administration of the questionnaire, which can be seen in Table 1, three main effects were found for sector, beyond the time of administration of the questionnaire: for the variables, meeting with others, knowledge about others and negative feelings towards others. The means for the sector groups at both timepoints can be seen in Figures 2-4.

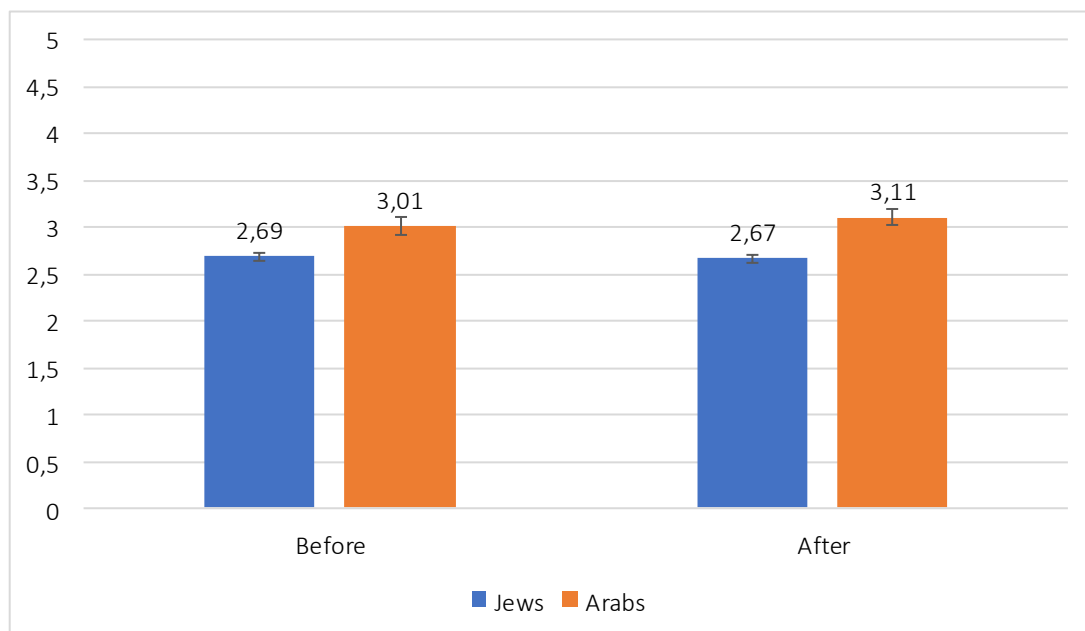


Figure 2. Differences between Jews and Arabs for the variable 'meeting with others' (Note: The error lines represent a standard error)

As can be seen from the graph in Figure 2, Arabs were found to have significantly higher values for the variable 'meeting with others, both pre-and post-course, as determined by the two-way ANOVA, $F(1,510) = 12.13$, $p = .001$. In order to confirm the data from the a-parametric Welch test and Bayesian test, additional tests were performed that also testified to significant differences between the groups: $F(1,142.98) = 18.07$, $p < .001$, $BF = .001$. Thus, the Arabs reported meeting with Jews more than Jews reported meeting with Arabs. Relatively large differences were also found regarding the variable 'knowledge regarding others', as can be seen in Figure 3.

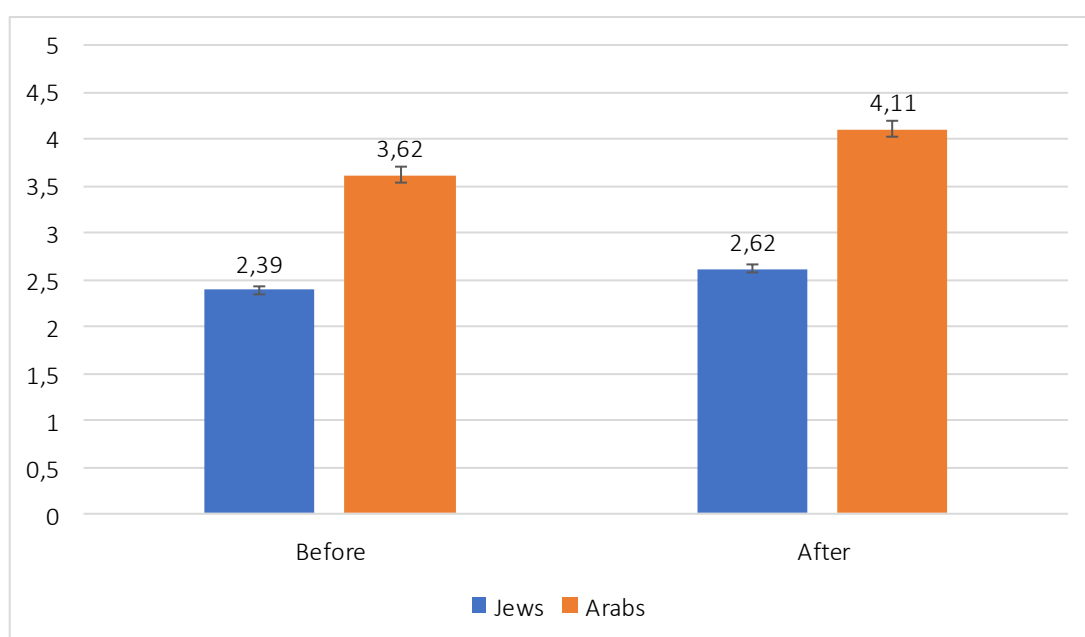


Figure 3. Differences between Jews and Arabs on the "knowledge of others" variable. (Note: The error bars represent standard errors.)

As can be seen in Figure 3, Arabs were also found to have significantly higher values for the variable 'knowledge on others', both pre-and post-course, as determined by the two-way analysis of variance, $F(1,510) = 169.68, p < .001$. Thus too the a-parametric tests testify to significant differences between the groups, $F(1,144.25) = 227.49, p < .001, BF < .001$. It therefore seems that the Arabs had more knowledge concerning the Jews than the Jews did concerning the Arabs. It is noted that these differences were substantial. Figure 4 presents the means for the groups for the variable 'negative feelings towards the other', for which significant differences were also found between the two sectors.

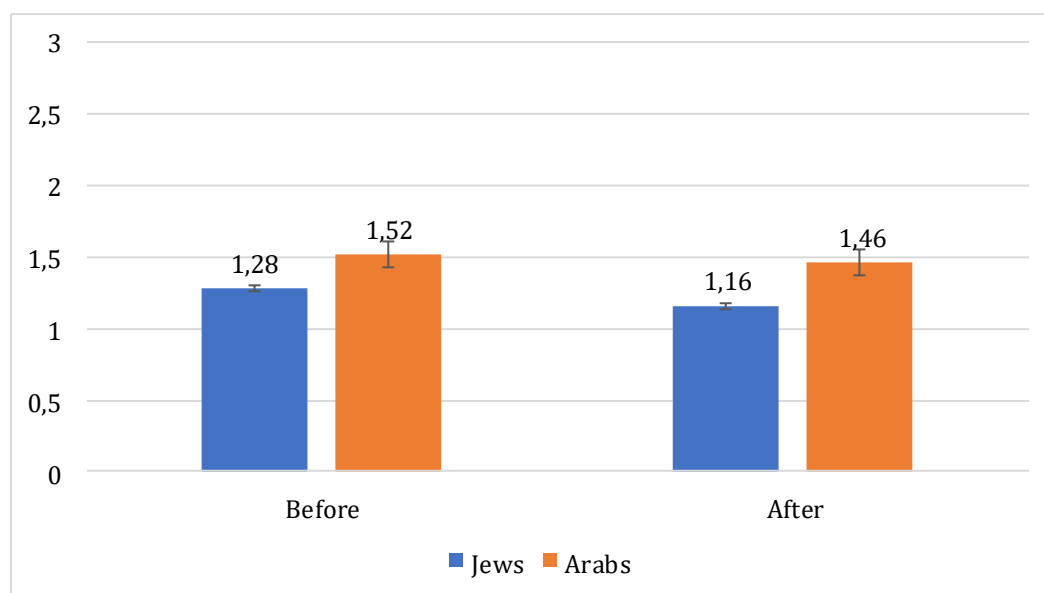


Figure 4. Differences between Jews and Arabs on the "negative feelings towards others" variable. (Note: The error bars represent standard errors.)

It is clear from Figure 4 that Arabs had significantly higher values for the variable 'negative feelings towards the others' both pre-and post-course as determined by the two-way analysis of variance, $F(1,510) = 15.88, p < .001$. Thus too, the a-parametric tests testify to significant differences between the groups, $F(1,108.74) = 10.26, p = .002, BF < .001$. This means that the Arabs felt more negative feelings towards the Jews than the Jews felt towards the Arabs.

In the post-course questionnaire, the students were also asked questions about the college and the course and its contribution. The means for the different variables can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Means for research variables relating to the academic environment

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's α
Multicultural academic atmosphere	4.42	0.64	.88
Mutual relations between the groups in the college	3.31	0.85	.88
Alteration of attitudes due to the course	2.34	0.36	.87
Contribution of the course to multicultural thinking	3.80	0.84	.93

Note: Possible range 1-5, for the variable 'alteration of attitudes due to the course' the range was 1-3.

Observation of the data in Table 2 indicates firstly that there is a multicultural academic atmosphere in the college, the mean for this variable is especially high and comes close to the highest range. Contrastingly, mutual relations between groups in the college are moderate, the mean for this variable revolves around the mid-range.

Regarding the contribution of the course, the students' reported that it does contribute to a change in their attitudes. A score of '2' for this variable would mean that no change occurred in relation to the past, and a score of '3' means that a change occurred in relation to the past. Since the mean for this variable is higher than '2', it seems that according to their reports, the students' attitudes have indeed altered. It also seems that the course contributed to their multicultural thinking, with the average for the variable being higher than the possible mid-range.

It seems that of all the possible contributions presented to the students, the variable 'understanding the concept of multiculturalism' (egalitarian recognition of diverse cultures in society) was given the highest score (mean 4.27). Differences were found between Jewish and Arab students for all four parameters, as can be seen in Table 3. Here too, because the size of the groups was different and the assumption of equality of variance does not exist, a-parametric Welch and Bayesian tests were performed.

Table 3. Means for the research variables dealing with the academic environment, for Jews and Arabs

Variable	Jews (n = 279-280)		Arabs (n = 71)		F	p	BF
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Multicultural academic atmosphere	4.54	0.56	3.94	0.73	41.24	.00	.000
Mutual relations between the groups in the college	3.22	0.83	3.66	0.83	15.73	.00	.005
Alteration of attitudes due to the course	2.28	0.33	2.58	0.34	43.56	.00	.000
Contribution of the course to multicultural thinking	3.70	0.86	4.18	0.67	25.49	.00	.001

Note: SD = Standard Deviation; possible range =1-5, for the variable 'alteration of attitudes' the possible range was 1-3; F= result of Welch test, p=significant value; BF=Bayes Factor

As can be seen from Table 3, Jews reported significantly more than Arabs that there is a multicultural academic atmosphere. In contrast, the Arabs reported in a significantly higher manner than the Jews that there are mutual relations between the groups in the college, that there is a more positive alteration in their attitudes towards the other group and towards multiculturalism and a greater contribution from the course to their multicultural thinking.

Spearman correlations were calculated between the research variables relating to the academic environment and the variables of the outcome, the dependent research variables. The correlations were only calculated at the second timepoint since data for the academic environment variables were not collected at the first time point. The results of the correlations are displayed in Table 4. As can be seen from the data in the Table, statistically significant correlations were found between most of the research variables.

Table 4. Correlations between the research variables dealing with the academic environment and outcome variables (n = 342-351)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Meetings with others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Knowledge on others	.29**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Attitudes towards others and multiculturalism	.17**	.16**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Performance of activities in a multicultural context in educational settings	.30**	.21**	.34**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Negative feelings towards others	.02	.18*	-.21**	-.16**	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Positive feelings towards others	.16**	.12*	.40**	.46**	-.23**	-	-	-	-	-
7. Multicultural academic atmosphere	.04	-.14**	.34**	.27**	-.31**	.37**	-	-	-	-
8. Mutual relations between the groups in the college	.38**	.35**	.26**	.33**	.01	.38**	.24**	-	-	-
9. Alteration of attitudes due to the course	.10	.25**	.27**	.18**	.06	.25**	.03	.31*	-	-
10. Contribution of the course to multicultural thinking	.23**	.25**	.44**	.48**	-.13*	.50**	.26**	.47**	.41**	-

Note: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$

Next, we examined our research model. We found that participation in the course predicts the acquisition of knowledge [$b = 0.32$, 95% C.I. (0.13, 0.50), $p < .001$]. In its turn, acquisition of knowledge predicted changed attitudes while controlling for participation in the course [$b = 0.11$, 95% C.I. (0.05, 0.17), $p < .001$]. At the next step, we found that in its

turn, changed attitudes predicted activities in a multicultural context while controlling for participation in the course and acquisition of knowledge [$b = 0.46$, 95% C.I. (0.35, 0.56), $p < .001$]. The unstandardized coefficients and 95% confidence intervals are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Path model to predict actions in a multicultural context

Path	Lower limit	Upper limit
participation in the course → activities in a multicultural context*	.01	.31
participation in the course → acquisition of knowledge → activities in a multicultural context*	.02	.10
participation in the course → changed attitudes → activities in a multicultural context	-.04	.08
participation in the course → acquisition of knowledge → changed attitudes → activities in a multicultural context*	.01	.03
Total indirect effect*	.02	.17

Note: * = a statistically significant path

From the data shown in Table 5 it appears, that there is a direct connection between participation in the course and activities in a multicultural context, such that in a direct manner, participation in the course predicts the performance of activities in a multicultural context in an educational setting. Several indirect effects were also found. As hypothesized, it was found that participation in the course was connected to more knowledge concerning multiculturalism, acquisition of knowledge in turn predicted a change in attitudes towards multiculturalism and towards the "other" group, a change which in turn predicted performance of activities in a multicultural context in an educational context. Also found to be significant was a path, according to which participation in the course was connected to the acquisition of knowledge, which in turn predicted the performance of activities in a multicultural context in an educational context. An indirect path that did not include acquisition of knowledge, was not found to be significant.

Discussion

The research examined the impact of a course entitled, "Diversity and multiculturalism in the global era," on Jewish and Arab course participants who were enrolled in a master's degree program in Policy and Administration in Education. The participants indicated that the course had increased their knowledge on multiculturalism, changed their former attitudes and helped them to advance activities in a multicultural context within educational settings. These findings echo findings of prior research conducted internationally, which testified to the contribution of intercultural meetings in academia to increase awareness of the "other" (Furcsa, 2009), broaden knowledge of other cultures, promote cultural openness (Krumer-Nevo & Sidi, 2012), increasing students' tolerance values and attitudes (Aslan & Aybek, 2020), and advance intercultural competence (Saleem, 2017).

The current research findings indicated a direct connection between participation in the course and performance of activities in the education field. In addition, the aforementioned association was mediated by students' acquisition of knowledge on multiculturalism. In other words, students' acquisition of knowledge and tools on the subject of multiculturalism, as a result of their participation in a multiculturalism course – which was designed in accordance with the principles of contact theory (Allport, 1954) – was a main factor that contributed to their performance of multicultural activities in the education field. Meetings between differing group members who live in environments of ongoing national and religious disputes can help to reduce prejudices and encourage cooperation between them. In regard to the present study, which included Jewish and Arab students in Israel, it is important to emphasize that there is a historical, national and religious dispute between the two populations. The current study's findings expand extant knowledge on education for multiculturalism in higher education institutions in Israel and fill a noted gap in the literature relating to the implementation of such education (Nahhas, 2020).

The course exposed the Jewish and Arab participants to various cultures and worldviews that they had not known about before. According to contact theory, this familiarization leads to increased tolerance and reduced reticence to form a connection with the "other." The group assignments given in the course, and the discussions conducted between members of the different groups, were performed in an egalitarian manner and helped to reduce participants' sense of foreignness and hostility, weaken stereotypes and reduce prejudices, as well as increase mutual openness, understanding and acceptance between them. Thus, the course, as part of the broader educational program, succeeded in increasing participants' levels of intergroup tolerance. It therefore seems that the course contributed significantly to the reduction of prejudices among both Jews and Arabs, altering their attitudes and behaviors and encouraging them to conduct multicultural activities in the education field. These results are in line with previous studies which noted the importance of multicultural education for ethnic minority group members, especially for ensuring equality (Guimond et al., 2014). Further, these findings support prior research demonstrating the significance of multicultural education for students from various minority and majority cultural and ethnic groups, especially due to dynamic global changes (Erbaş, 2019).

The research participants reported that there was a multicultural academic atmosphere in the college, and moderate reciprocal relations between the two (Jewish and Arab) groups in the college. The fact that the college had specific goals to promote education for multiculturalism may explain these findings. The college ensured that basic changes were implemented, in line with the approach of Nieto (1992), who argued that education for multiculturalism necessitates basic changes to education, beginning with pluralism and ending with the promotion of relationships between students and teachers. Multicultural education also necessitates the adoption of a critical pedagogical approach that generates changes in knowledge and activities, as well as promotes social justice principles in a modern, pluralistic and democratic society that respects all of its members (Banks & McGee Banks, 2001).

Additionally, the research findings were in line with previous study findings indicating that a multicultural academic atmosphere (Lev Ari & Mula, 2016; Paul-Binyamin & Haj-Yehia, 2019; Wilson, 2018) and a significant experience in an environment that teaches democratic values (Funk & Willits, 1987) influences students' social and political attitudes (Anderson, 2016). A multicultural academic atmosphere also helps students to enact socio-moral change (Banks, 1995), such that they can serve as socialization agents who provide education that advocates for social justice, and is based on egalitarian considerations and a humanist-democratic viewpoint that teaches respect of all people (McGee Banks, 2008).

The research findings provide a meaningful contribution to the understanding of the ways in which the experience of education for multiculturalism affects Jews and Arabs. *Before the course*, the Arab students – the minority group members – coped with a complex reality in Israel. The findings indicated that the Arab students who participated in the course were all educators studying to become educational leaders, were older in age, and had previous knowledge of Jewish society due to the Ministry of Education's policy obliging Arab students to study Jewish history and literature and to learn Hebrew from the third grade. In contrast, the Jewish students were not obliged to learn Arabic in school nor to learn about Arab religions, literature or the history of the Arab people (Lev Ari & Mula, 2014). Moreover, Arabs' interaction with Jews is part of the reality in Israel; although Arab and Jewish localities are separate, all government services including hospitals and other essential services are located in Jewish towns. This particular arrangement increases the entrance of Arabs into Jewish localities, but not the entrance of Jews into Arab localities. Further, Arabs have integrated into the general Israeli labor market.

Differences were found between Arab and Jewish students after the course in four parameters: Jews reported experiencing an academic multicultural atmosphere significantly more than Arab students. In contrast, Arab students reported that there were reciprocal relations between the groups in the college significantly more than Jewish students. Further, Arab students, more than Jewish students, reported that their attitudes became more positive towards the other group and towards multiculturalism, and that the course more strongly contributed to their multicultural thinking and understanding of the concept of multiculturalism as a necessity for cultural egalitarianism in society. A possible explanation for these differences in the influence of the course may be attributed to the fact that Arab students, who arrived from a more conservative and less heterogeneous society, had not been exposed to the concept of multiculturalism beforehand, and had not encountered it in their earlier education stages. In comparison, the Jewish student population was comprised of different cultures within Jewish society (e.g., Oriental, Ashkenazi, secular, religious, traditional, ultra-Orthodox, Russian-origin, Ethiopian-origin etc.) and had increased prior experience with a multicultural society. Thus, the Arab students may have indicated that the course influenced them more than the Jewish students because their starting point of diversity exposure was lower, and the course provided them with the opportunity to learn in a class with people from many different cultures.

Additionally, the strong contribution of the course for Arab students, similar to other minority groups in the world, may stem from their perception of the majority group as a group that they can one day join or as a group that could support social change; thus, Arab students' more positive attitudes may be helpful in improving their status and treatment in the long-term, and could subsequently lead to a reduction in prejudice against them (Heinke et al., 2013). The course also helped to empower Arab students. As a minority group, they hold a low status in Israeli society, but in the academic context, they possess the same level of education and employment status as their Jewish counterparts. The knowledge and tools that they acquired in the course increased their awareness of the importance of improving connections, and collaborating with their Jewish classmates as a means for social change (Maoz, 2002). These findings are consistent with the findings of Bar and Bar Gal (1995), who pointed to the importance of multicultural education in raising minority group members' awareness of their discrimination, and to their willingness to act to change the situation by promoting multicultural education activities.

Practical and Theoretical Implications

The research findings may contribute to the empowerment of a managerial cadre that aims to promote multicultural education in Israel. This can be achieved through enacting a training program on diversity, reinforcing grassroots movements and initiatives developed during the past decade, developing shared education settings for Jews and Arabs, and supporting the initiative of the Israeli president, Reuven Rivlin, to promote education for multiculturalism founded on equality between the different sectors of the population.

The findings also add to extant research literature on intercultural relations between groups that live in ongoing conflict situations. Promoting meaningful education for multiculturalism requires intergroup contact within the formal framework of theory-based courses, which emphasize acquisition of knowledge and are supported by a multicultural organizational vision. These two elements in combination can create a firm foundation for the promotion of equality and social justice. No lesser a contribution of the findings to the existing literature is the importance of training educational leaders for multiculturalism before their entry into managerial roles, including equipping them with skills for education for multiculturalism so that they can establish an appropriate school culture, create supportive learning environments for all students irrespective of ethnic background or social status, enable equal learning opportunities for each child and contribute to the improvement of the school's performances (Dimmock & Walker, 2005).

Beyond the current study's contribution to the research literature, findings can also inform future principals in their efforts to address cultural diversity and promote intercultural connections among both teachers and students. These findings can especially help principals who desire to invest in preparing their teachers to teach within a school context of cultural diversity, and educators who want to diligently prepare their students for future success in a global world. Cultivating a multicultural education that provides students with knowledge and tools, and is based on the principles of respect for diversity, equality and interaction, provides students with the opportunity to experience multiculturalism, particularly through encounters with culturally-different "others", or those with whom there is ongoing political, religious or national conflict. To be successful, various factors must be considered to distinguish these encounters from typical encounters. Steps must be taken to ensure that the relationship will be beneficial to both parties; for example, by determining and implementing prerequisite conditions for effective contact and encouraging ongoing interaction after initial contact. By taking these steps, educators can positively influence how their students will feel when interacting with culturally-different "others". This, in turn, facilitates teachers' efforts to prepare their students to successfully live and work in a multicultural society and world. By intergrating these measures into academic courses, higher education institutions can more optimally serve their students by properly preparing them for intercultural interactions; conversely, without proper preparation, students will engage in interactions for which they are unprepared, which may lead to negative consequences, such as the retention or even reinforcement of their prior prejudices. It is important to add that this study was conducted in the particular context of the State of Israel, a state in which there is suspicion, fear and hostility between Jews and Arabs; the study of this topic in a conflict-ridden setting lends additional significance to the research findings and conclusions. However, research findings may still be applicable to other settings, and readers may find that the results and their implications can inform the use of similar programs in other countries as well.

Recommendations

The present study investigated the influence of students' multicultural learning experience and their acquisition of knowledge and tools in one particular course, as part of a master's degree program in education, at a single college. Most of the students were educationists, data were collected via self-report and no investigation was conducted in the field to follow-up on how multicultural activities were implemented. Further research should examine this topic in other colleges and universities, test whether findings replicate in a sample that includes more men, and gather qualitative data to complement the quantitative data.

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, students completed self-report questionnaires. These self-report data may be subject to response bias and common method variance. Further, the study was conducted in a single college and the sample was primarily composed of women; although the gender ratio represents the reality that most post-graduate students in education are women, future studies may consider targeted recruitment methods to examine this topic among men.

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