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MULTICULTURAL ASPECTS IN EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING IN ISRAEL

ABSTRACT. Liviatan Sarit Albaldes, *Multicultural Aspects in Educational Counseling in Israel* [Wielokulturowe aspekty doradztwa edukacyjnego w Izraelu]. *Studia Edukacyjne* nr 40, 2016, Poznań 2016, pp. 411-419. Adam Mickiewicz University Press. ISSN 1233-6688. DOI: 10.14746/se.2016.40.21

Many waves of migration have shaped the multicultural structure of contemporary society in many countries, including Israel. Israeli society is multifaceted from almost every possible perspective. This diversity, with its implications, is expressed in all areas of life, including education. The multicultural approach opens a space of respect for all cultures, assuming that as the person as an individual and society as a whole will absorb components from different cultures in it there will be cultural richness. The educational system constitutes a main mechanism through which Israeli society is dealing with this issue. Many counsellors are required to address issues of intercultural encounter during their work. The counsellor's involvement in this context in the school is expressed in different dimensions: knowledge in the school program and in the degree to which it fits the multiculturalism of the school population, relationship with the school staff about coping with the daily challenges of the intercultural topic, and parent involvement. Counselling in the school has a wide range of actions, including individualized work, group work and community work. The counsellors face many challenges in activity in the multicultural aspect. The school based on active and healthy pedagogical and counselling principles may cause significant community changes outside of its walls.

Key words: multicultural aspects, immigrants, education, educational counselling, Israel

Mass migration is one of the main processes that have occurred in the late modern era, and it influences the shape of every contemporary Western society. Many waves of migration have shaped the multicultural structure of current society in different countries, including in Israel.¹

¹ A.D. Epstein, *The 'Russian' Perception of Jewish Education*, [in:] *Education in Multicultural Society, Pluralism, and Encounter Point between Cultural Divisions*, Ed. P. Perry, Jerusalem 2007.

The process of immigration has influences both on the level of the individual, on the student, and on the level of the family. The transition from one culture to another one is a complex process that entails many changes and is generally accompanied by many pressures.²

Israeli society is diverse (pluralistic) from almost every possible aspect: nationality, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language. This diversity, with its implications, is expressed in all areas of life, including education.³ Leshem⁴ emphasizes that Israel is a special case of a culturally diverse society in which complex reciprocal relations develop between the different immigrant groups and these give a unique character to the multiculturalism that develops in the State of Israel.

Questions of diversity and pluralism shape society and are found at the center of its social and political discourse. With these questions, there are also questions of equality in the education of minority groups, primarily the education of immigrants.⁵

The interaction between minority groups and the majority society or between the dominant groups in society and in education can be characterized in a tripartite manner, as follows:

1. Assimilation. The adoption of all the components of the majority culture (language, traditions, and values), to the point of the abandonment of the original culture of the minority.

2. Separatism. The rejection of one side or both sides of one another and every attempt at integration. The outcome is co-existence, with only formal relationships or with mutual ignoring of one another. Or the more difficult possibility is existence with continuous conflict.

3. Multiculturalism. Adaptation out of reciprocal adjustment, or in other words, existence with one another and not one beside the other or one opposite the other, not out of lack of choice but out of intention and reciprocal acceptance.

Mounter, Sagi, and Shamir⁶ emphasize that the term 'multiculturalism' includes on the one hand the existence of different cultures side by side and on the other hand dialogue-based relations of respect between the groups. In multiculturalism there is no construction of a new culture but the giving of

² R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work for Educational Counselors with Immigrant Students and Their Family*, Ministry of Education, 2013.

³ Y. Iram, *Diversity and Multiculturalism in Israeli Society*, The School of Education, Israel 1999.

⁴ Leshem 2004, in: R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

⁵ Y. Iram, *Diversity and Multiculturalism in Israeli Society*.

⁶ M. Mounter, A. Sagi, R. Shamir (Eds.), *Multiculturalism in a Democratic and Jewish Country*, Tel Aviv 1998.

a place to the original identity in a space that has additional identities. The different groups live in cooperation and mutual enrichment.⁷

The multicultural approach means first and foremost an attitude of respect to cultures and their owners. This respect does not necessarily mean that the cultures are accepted by us to the same extent, but rather that we respect every culture equally, even if it is not accepted by us, that we recognize the unique contribution of the different cultures to society and state, that we recognize the right of groups and individuals to a unique identity, and that we ensure equality of educational opportunities and in the rest of the areas to each one of the members of the different cultures.⁸

Multicultural thinking entails a number of challenges. First, it is necessary to preserve the individual's freedoms and rights while giving rights to the cultural groups, when the protection of the culture in essence protects the individual. Second, it is necessary to hold inter-group relations through the assurance of channels of dialogue and relation between the different groups and establishment of relations of respect of others.⁹

Raising the awareness serves to leverage the creation of a more just and equal society and provides a true opportunity to different groups to leave their social marginality and to integrate into society. The cultivation of a culture of equality and caring for one another is the main objective in the multicultural approach. The decision of the State of Israel in the Declaration of Independence to address every person as an equal indicates the fundamental principal of every value-oriented reference in education.¹⁰

The multicultural perception opens a space of respect to all cultures from the assumption that every person as an individual and society as a whole will collect elements from the different cultures that exist in it, and thus cultural richness is created.¹¹ The integration between cultures creates the potential for creativity, originality, and cognitive enrichment.¹² The simultaneous presentation of the different perspectives contributes to the creation of critical thinking among students and helps them develop self-criticism of their actions.¹³ Education for multiculturalism emphasizes not only the dif-

⁷ S. Maslacha, *Individualized Counseling in a Multicultural Society*, [in:] *Counseling in the School in a Changing Society*, Eds. R. Arharad, A. Klingman, Tel Aviv 2004.

⁸ Y. Iram, *Diversity and Multiculturalism in Israeli Society*.

⁹ R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

¹⁰ P. Perry (Ed.), *Education in Multicultural Society*.

¹¹ R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

¹² Moodley 1983, in: A.D. Epstein, *The 'Russian' Perception of Jewish Education*.

¹³ N. Hidalgo, *Multicultural Teacher Introspection*, [in:] *Freedoms Plow: Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom*, Eds. T. Perry, J. Fraser, New York 1993, p. 99-106.

ferences but also the similarities among people who belong to different cultures, which serve as a basis for drawing closer to them.¹⁴

Multicultural education enables an intercultural dialogue. Multicultural education educates for sensitivity towards beliefs, opinions, customs, and needs of others. It enables dialogue from reciprocal intercultural recognition.¹⁵

The composition of Israeli society, which includes a considerable and rich variety of groups and social categories, identities, and lifestyles, influences our being, thinking, and feelings and consequently the behavior of each and every one of us. Such a society constitutes a constant challenge in our work in education.¹⁶ The presence of the other, the different person, is the blessing that has blessed pluralistic society. Through it we have the privilege to create an internal and external dialogue that can enrich us as individuals and as a society. The increase of the awareness of the way in which we perceive the person who is different and our attitude towards him is the foundation stone in the perception of our role as educators and then in the creation of change in Israeli society.¹⁷ The creation of a space in which all children and parents know that their belonging to a group is legitimate and there is room to express true opinions and feelings constitutes the essence of the cultural approach.

The cultural community to which the individual belongs has decisive importance. Sandel¹⁸ and Taylor¹⁹ maintain that the individual cannot determine his identity in a manner dependent on a given community and its values and he learns to be aware of himself and to form his identity only in the community framework in which he is embedded and from which he draws his values. The connection to the family roots, the understanding of the family heritage, is most significant.

The educational system constitutes a main mechanism through which Israeli society copes with the topic of multiculturalism. In most schools in Israel there is an encounter among cultures at different levels.²⁰

The school is the single institution where members of different ethnic communities unavoidably meet, and therefore this is the place that is supposed to draw them closer through the creation of a system of reciprocal

¹⁴ Gibson 1984, in: A.D. Epstein, *The 'Russian' Perception of Jewish Education*.

¹⁵ Y. Iram, *Diversity and Multiculturalism in Israeli Society*.

¹⁶ N. Venezia, *Maze of Mirrors: On Education for Multiculturalism in Israel*, 2007.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ Sandel 1982, in: Y. Yonah, *Multicultural Education in Israel: Challenges and Difficulties*, [in:] *Education in Multicultural Society*.

¹⁹ Taylor 1994, in: *ibidem*.

²⁰ S. Maslach, *Individualized Counseling*.

acquaintanceship. Addressing the unique background of the different cultures will also make an important contribution from a didactic perspective.²¹

Many counselors are required to deal with issues of the intercultural encounter during their work and do this through a "growing educational space". The growing educational space is the space created in the encounter in which all the people in the encounter have the right to make their selfhoods present in the sense of their values and personal cultural attitudes, the knowledge at their disposal, and their skill. The very presence of their self in these aspects enables them to present who they are, their 'otherness'. This space is created when all the partners in the encounter are allowed to make themselves present as subjects in the sense of the values, knowledge, and skills that they bring with them to the encounter. From the moment that the partners make themselves present, an opportunity for a growing educational dialog is opened. The products of the conversation can be different and diverse and will not necessarily lead to agreement and consensus, but the very possibility of meeting the other in his otherness promotes the responsibility and enables the growth in the intercultural conversation. Under conditions of respect, the dialogue-speech is the means by which each one can make his otherness present in the encounter and achieve an attitude of love and responsibility. The words of Rabbi Akiva 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself' illustrates the importance of the other person and creates a parallel between love and responsibility.²²

Roer-Strier²³ proposes that two dimensions be addressed so as to increase the feeling of belonging.

1. To extend the knowledge of all the students and parents about the cultures of all the students who learn in the school.
2. To legitimize the cultural expression of every child in the class.

The involvement of the counselor in the multicultural context in the school is expressed in different dimensions: knowledge in the school program and degree of fit to the multiculturalism of the school population, relationship with the school staff regarding the coping with the daily challenges on the intercultural topic, planning and implementation of community programs that involve parents from different cultural backgrounds. The school counseling has a wide range of action that includes individualized work,

²¹ A.D. Epstein, *The 'Russian' Perception of Jewish Education*.

²² R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

²³ D. Roer-Strier, *Parenting Styles of Immigrants for Preventative Intervention and Family Therapy*, Society and Welfare, 1996, 16(4), p. 467-481.

group work, and community work, and the target population includes the students, the staff of teachers and the management, and the parents.²⁴

The important role of the educational counselor in a multicultural society is to create a school climate that respects difference and enables students and their families to preserve their unique identity. The professional literature that addresses the counseling skill required of the counselors who provide care for immigrant students maintains that the counselors must be 'culturally skilled' when they care for the students they counsel who are different in terms of cultural, national, religious, or ethnic background.²⁵

Gordon²⁶ says that the role of the educational counselor is to undertake active efforts to influence the role-holders and groups that can generate the essential and relevant changes regarding the conditions that determine the course of life of the students. According to Maslacha,²⁷ the counselor on the one hand moderates and refines expressions of intercultural conflicts and on the other hand pushes in the direction of intercultural cooperation and enrichment. It is possible to see the intercultural counseling encounter as a microcosm of the society of which the counselor and the counseled are a part. Hence, the meaning of the processes that occur in the counseling encounter is obtained. From this perspective it is necessary to invest the utmost professional efforts so that the intercultural counseling encounter will be a productive dialogue.²⁸

The counseling response to the population of students from different cultural backgrounds and immigrants in the school derived from the recognition of the need for the joint effort of all those who engage in the care of the population of immigrants, out of the recognition of the complexity of the unique needs of this population and the high risk data of immigrant students, relative to their percentage in the population. The counselors must meet every student with his unique aspects, know the difficulties alongside the abilities, the talents, the hopes, the longing, and adjust the work plan suited to the specific needs. The need for the social emotional engagement directs to promote the wellbeing of the immigrant students and to promote their functioning in the school and in society.²⁹

The counselor must display knowledge, understanding, and sensitivity regarding the culture of the counseled student, his unique internal and social

²⁴ S. Maslacha, *Individualized Counseling*.

²⁵ R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

²⁶ E. Gordon (Ed.), *Education and Justice: A Review from the Back of the Bus*, New York 1999.

²⁷ S. Maslacha, *Individualized Counseling*.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

world, and the reciprocal relations between the individual and his culture.³⁰ The understanding of the cultural background of the counseled student helps organize the complexity of the difficulties he presents to the counselor. The counselor's knowledge and understanding regarding the counseled student's cultural background are essential so that he can offer help to the counseled student.³¹ Sue and Zane³² (1987) hold that it is necessary to derive from the knowledge the techniques appropriate to the unique treatment situations.

The sensitivity that constitutes additional value and constitutes in essence a component that complements knowledge has supreme importance and constitutes a significant factor. In certain counseling issues it is a decisive factor.³³

In the encounter with immigrant students it is very important to give a place for the abilities and strengths of the individual as a platform from which he can grow and develop. The recognition of every individual as a subject with needs, values, abilities, emotions, insights, which have a place for expression in the relationship without erasing or eliminating those of others, invites all of us to increase our social competence. The educational system has the privilege and duty to offer a potential space of optimal growth and mental wellbeing for all those in the school. The counselors can be in a pro-active position from social responsibility and willingness for social influence.³⁴

Quantitative and qualitative researches in the field of intercultural developmental psychology show that there are most significant differences in the socialization of children from different cultures. These differences are expressed both in the ideology of the raising of children (the beliefs that the parents hold regarding the correct way of educating and socializing children) and the patterns of raising children, which are the behaviors and practices of education and socialization.³⁵

The researchers of family and children from the field of immigration in the world maintains that immigrant children and the children of immigrants are found at risk when there are differences between the socialization sys-

³⁰ S. Maslacha, *Individualized Counseling*.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² S. Sue, N. Zane, *The Role of Culture and Cultural Techniques in Psychotherapy: A Critique and Reformulation*, *American Psychologist*, 1987, 42, p. 37-45.

³³ S. Maslacha, *Individualized Counseling*.

³⁴ R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

³⁵ D. Roer-Strier, *Parenting Styles of Immigrants for Preventative Intervention*, p. 467-481.

tems in the home and those outside of the home. These differences may cause the misunderstandings and conflicts between the educational systems and the family, thus influencing the family functioning, the children's achievements, the social integration, the self-worth, and the self-identity.³⁶

The involvement of the child's family in his educational framework has considerable potential to contribute to his development and success as a student. The parents' involvement depends on the relations between them and the school. Positive relations are more important to overcome the cultural gaps that produce a gap between the school perception and the parents' perception in relation to different issues.³⁷ When these relations are created, the parent acquires a sense of status and importance esteemed by others, thus increasing the children's motivation to participate in the educational framework and obtain educational achievements and causing the parents to support the educational framework.³⁸

Rogers and Ponterotto³⁹ maintain that intercultural awareness and skills and sensitivity in interpersonal relations are among the traits that increase the counselor's ability to cope with environmental and cultural factors that influence the children from different cultures and have implications on the counseling relationship. Rogers et al.⁴⁰ emphasized that the counselors must be involved in the ongoing process of professional development, so that they will acquire the knowledge and skills that will allow them to cope effectively with the multicultural reality of the school.

The challenges that the counselors face in the activity in the multicultural aspect are many and significant. The educational counselor has a main place in the framework of the institutional structure and the organizational culture in the school. The actions and interventions with the students from different backgrounds have implications on the systemic level. Alongside the individualized and group treatment and alongside interventions in crisis, it is necessary to examine the extent to which the counselor can organizationally 'move' the schools: changes in the standards of the placement of students from different cultural backgrounds in the classes, changes in the placement of teachers into the different classes and learning groups, establishment of

³⁶ Bradon 2002, in: *ibidem*; Gratton, Gutmann, Skop 2007, in: *ibidem*.

³⁷ R. Katz, H. Barnea, *Counseling for Immigrants: Rubric for Work*.

³⁸ Noguera 2001, in: D. Roer-Strier, *Parenting Styles of Immigrants for Preventative Intervention*, p. 467-481.

³⁹ M.R. Rogers, J.G. Ponterotto, *Development of the Multicultural School Psychology Counseling Scale*, *Psychology in the Schools*, 1997, 34, p. 211-217.

⁴⁰ Rogers et al. 1999, in: S. Maslacha, *Individualized Counseling*.

emotional groups of students with different cultural backgrounds, and involvement of the parents in the different processes.⁴¹ A pluralistic school based on healthy pro-active pedagogical and counseling principles may generate significant changes in the community beyond its walls.⁴²

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⁴¹ M. Tatar, *Counseling in Educational Communities Assimilating Immigration*, [in:] *Counseling in the School in a Changing Society*, Eds. R. Arharad, A. Klingman, Tel Aviv 2004.

⁴² Ibidem.