Abstract

Informal education is an organized and systematic educational paradigm that operates independent of the formal education system and entails distinct educational goals, such as cultivating individual abilities, gaining knowledge, education for recreational activities, or ideological education (Mandel-Levi and Artzi, 2016). It is a learning process that extends across life and lies on various situations and a variety of topics which grant an added value to the course of life of its participants (Shamid and Romi, 2007).

Informal education has the potential to serve as a significant instrument to reduce socio-economic gaps by providing alternative opportunities to succeed for students who have difficulty reaching achievements within the setting of formal education. This is through, for example, developing soft skills that are not taught in the framework of formal education, creating social bonds and strengthening self-esteem (Haddad Haj-Yahia and Rodnitsky, 2018; Morton & Montgomery, 2012). Informal education includes education for multiculturalism and civic and social education, the goal of which is mainly to reduce social gaps.

Informal education in the Arab society has started to develop in the 1970s. Youth movements which were associated with certain political parties or carried political agenda were born. However, Due to lack in budget and late legislation, a gap is evident between the level of development of informal education in Arab society and its counterpart in the Jewish society. This gap manifests in several aspects: its nationwide distribution, amount of its activities, quality of activities, and accessibility to infrastructure.

In recent decades, there has been an ongoing rise in the number of parents in Arab society who see the benefits of their children's participation in informal education. These parents see the benefits of recreation, leisure hours and their positive effect on psychological and academic development of their children (Hadad Haj-Yahia and others, 2018). Recent studies across the world the world have defined criteria for informal education and have shown that membership in youth movements significantly improves employment opportunities of young people through the improvement of human capital, social capital and psychological capital (Souto-Otero, 2016).

The purpose of the study is to examine how the participation of members of the Arab society in Israel in informal education programs affects their sense of self-efficacy, belonging to the community and their involvement in it. In Examining the research variables and analyzing the various correlations that emerges in the findings chapter will enable me to extract causes for the lack of sufficient Arab involvement in formal education and higher education. Examining Arab society in Israel necessitates special attention due to the special cultural, religious and community elements, including among others ideological entry barriers for the community.

It should also be noted that the study hypotheses included reference to the gender of the subjects, the frequency of participation in each informal program, including their use of instruction roles, the scope of their activity in each program and the duration of participation in it. I also examined differences related to the type of activity the participants took part in, the frequency of participation, satisfaction with the programs,

etc. In correlations analyses, emphasis is given to examining the attitudes of graduates towards informal education and its goals. The aim is to examine how this educational framework affects one's perception of self-efficacy, involvement in their community and their sense of community belonging through a broader perspective that does not only include variables internal to the subjects but also those external to them.

The study's sample included 154 participants. The statistical analyses revealed that no significant difference were found in their demographic data which could affect the significance of the findings. However, it should be noted that 31% men and 69% women were included in the study. This gender advantage to women was taken into account in the statistical analyses so that the findings were weighted proportionally and was not overly influenced by it.

According to the purpose of the research, I will hold a discussion which will be divided into seven main parts. In the first part I will present how active participation in informal education programs affects the development of self-efficacy, community involvement and belonging. In the second part, I will present the interrelationships and mutual nurturing between formal and informal education frameworks. In the third part I will show how community involvement is a result of an individual's self-image. In the fourth part I will discuss religious and cultural barriers as factors that hinder the level of involvement of members of Arab society in informal settings. In the fifth part, I will analyze how informal education frameworks may promote multiculturalism among minority groups especially by engaging instructional roles. In the sixth part I will describe how participation in informal educational frameworks promotes the development of active citizenship of the individual. Finally, I will show how the fact that informal education frameworks operate in an educational field that allows for practical experience is a significant added value for the development of the one's sense of self-efficacy, community involvement and belonging.

The findings of this study show that there is an imperative need for the existence of an educational field equivalent to that of formal education, one that is more relevant to the lives of the young people of Arab society that can help them develop their self-efficacy and deal with challenges and difficulties throughout their lives (Morton & Montgomery, 2012). Formal education often functions in a manner that is disconnected, inflexible not renewable enough, and therefore loses relevance for some of its participants. This claim can be explained by the fact that formal education is purposeful and does not examine the extent to which it adapts to the changing reality. On the other hand, informal education constantly examines changing reality, is closely related to life events, and aims to develop skills and provide toolbox for their participants (Shamide and Rumi, 2007).

The current study included a variety of questionnaires administered to the participants covering the various research variables. A combination of questionnaires was overcome inherent problems and shortcomings of individual questionnaire and to try to present a broader picture regarding the development of different models for implementing the goals of informal education in the Arab society in Israel. The discussion of the results of this study points out to a phenomenon that appears in the research literature according to which: informal education is used as an institution that empowers,

nurtures, contributes to its participants. It provides plenty of creativity and has a positive value for attendees. The human side also stands out in informal settings, in the form of a warm and personal relationship (with teachers), which is often absent from formal education settings (Gross and Goldert, 2017). The study shows that the graduates of informal education in the Arab society in Israel, including those who served as instructors in these frameworks, reported that informal education had a significant contribution to them that helped them throughout their lives. They believed that the ways of working, the contents, tools, skills and the values in the informal frameworks may greatly help the individual to deal better with various challenges that the formal education system invites, both in terms of social values and achievement-wise. The informal education system offers an alternative based on flexibility, openness, pluralism and democracy, which often stands as an antithesis to the formal education system which is seen as restrictive, conservative and not open to changes (Silverman-Keller, 2004).

The study shows that the informal education system has a direct positive effect on its participants. This effect is evident in several areas, some of which relate to targets and objectives that the formal education system has difficulty achieving. I showed that the more the study participants reported engagement in their current activity in informal settings, the more the scope and duration of their participation increased. This is especially so in the group of participants who served in instruction roles which increased their ability to persist in the activity. I also showed that even in the indicators of self-efficacy, belonging to the community, satisfaction and involvement in the community, the more the subject reported that he was involved in informal settings and took an active and meaningful part in them, the more there was an increase in each of the indicators. From this it is evident that, indeed, participation in informal educational frameworks in childhood and youth has a positive effect on the ability of their graduates to develop self-efficacy and satisfaction with the course of their lives and their wider community. Moreover, participating in informal education has the power to encourage the graduates of the program to show caring in the form of greater community involvement and belonging to the community in which they live, independent of the shared cultural identity (Haddad-Haj Yahya and Rodnitsky, 2018). The community involvement, belonging, life satisfaction and care allow people to face the challenges of the hour that life presents and to achieve impressive outcomes even in higher education and to open up future employment directions.

Indeed, informal education programs are used as a tool to build a strong society even after a regional conflict, through providing life skills which can rehabilitate communities (Van der Linden, 2015). This is even more the case within the Arab society -- which this paper sought to scrutinize in this respect. Policy makers in Israel in general, and in the Israeli Arab society in particular, are highly encouraged to adopt informal education frameworks as an important tool for promoting the integration of the Arab society in the labor market, in higher education and in other formal settings. Informal programs have a wide-ranging potential to contribute to the one's willingness to develop positive behavior despite life's difficulties and challenges. This willingness had a positive effect which empowers people to penetrate the human, social and psychological capital of the Arab society in Israel (Souto-Otero, 2015). However, as this study shows, the road to executing comprehensive informal educational programs

in the Arab society is long and complex. Most of the young Arabs do not integrate into informal educational programs despite the operation of especially dedicated programs and the allocation of resources by the Arab local authorities (Weisblai, 2020). Recognizing the tremendous potential inherent in these frameworks for the advancement of the Arab-Israeli society, is critical to change these trends and reduce the structural and cultural-religious barriers that make it difficult for conservative Arab leadership to open up to such foreign settings (Haddad Haj-Yahia and Rudinitzky, 2018).

The significance of this paper lies, first and foremost, in empirical results which highlight the importance of informal education programs and their tremendous potential to promote Arab society in Israel. Should policy makers internalize these findings and apply them in the field, the entire educational system - both formal and informal is ought to be positively influenced. In fact, informal formals should nourish the formal programs and serve as a central tool for them to promote educational goals and reduce undesirable phenomena among Arab society (Zamir and Lasry-Roush, 2014).

The findings of this study should contribute to the development of various models for accomplishing the goals of informal education in the Arab society in Israel. These models should aim to offer effective education programs for implementation in informal education settings, and at the same time offer suggestions for implementation in formal education settings.