

Translated from Hebrew, published in the Calcalist - September 3, 2021

Joint Jewish-Arab Education in Schools—a Must and Also a Right

Only when one rejects the erroneous premise and experiences in-depth work as part of a mixed Jewish-Arab team, can one understand the unusual educational, value-based and professional opportunities that accompany it.

By Yuval Dvir

All the demons broke out suddenly and with them a rainbow of fears, above all obscuring the great fear of a hostile takeover of the shaping of values, history and narrative in the education of Israeli children from Jewish society. The fear is understandable, the issue is indeed complex, but the evolving discourse does not touch on the significant layers of the issue. Let me briefly share my thoughts about this.

According to the prevailing premise among many audiences, educators from Arab society are unfamiliar and unable to teach the core values of Jewish society, and in addition they are certainly opposed to them. This premise serves as a well-known reason for stopping the integration of educators from Arab society into Jewish society, and it has a racist scent.

With a closer look at the reality in Israel today, it can be seen that many spaces in our society are led by fine professionals from the Arab society, for example in academia, politics and medicine. These professionals balance well between the core values of Jewish society and those of Arab society, strengthen what they have in common (and there is much of it) and promote us as a better and more complete Israeli society. Looking at the world, it can be seen that anchor issues, such as the memory of the Jewish Holocaust, are taught in different countries of the world by non-Jewish educators, and we as a society even strive for this.

Would the discourse now developing in Herzliya Pituach and other cities be hot if it were an educator with an American Christian background, for example? From an educational point of view, we must remember that the core values of a society are acquired in a long process that begins in the student's home, continues in the extended family, in the community, in informal activities, and of course in kindergartens and schools. In this sense the class educator does not deal with these issues exclusively, and necessarily does so as part of the national curriculum.

The essence of the educational act is not in imparting knowledge, but in shaping the ways of thinking and learning among students. Any professional educator (for example from Arab society) will know how to do this successfully. On a personal level, I am present every day anew the wonderful ability of my colleagues from Arab society to teach values and critical thinking, and to discuss the history of my people and my family, Holocaust survivors in the State of Israel. Only when one rejects the premise and experiences in-depth work with a Jewish-Arab team, can one understand the unusual educational, value-based and professional opportunity that accompanies it.

As a school principal, I am also exposed to manpower shortages in teaching in Jewish society. At the same time as principals find it difficult to staff teaching standards, and the existing teaching force is eroded in the face of changing working conditions and the corona crisis, about 7,000 teaching workers from Arab society do not enter the labor force due to lack of standards in schools in Arab society. Many of them are educators in heart and soul, who can help with a proper and professional solution to the growing distress already now, advance their careers, and improve the face of Israeli society as a whole. We did it in the world of medicine, we can do it in the world of education as well. True, this is a delicate process with many complexities. But with long-term thinking, tolerance and uncompromising professionalism, we can. The change along the way is worth preparing for.

Need support? We are here with you, 18 male and female educators (6 from Arab society, 8 from Jewish society, 4 international) who choose to work together every day and believe in each other. Educate together. Do not give up. A joint Jewish-Arab education in schools is not only a must for the future image of Israeli society, it is also an extraordinary right.