

Ethiopian Students at an Academic College of Education: Integration or segregation?

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Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine Ethiopian students enrolled at a college of education with respect to their feelings and perceptions about the college. Specifically, the research examined the extent to which these students perceive the college as a multicultural institution where they can integrate academically and socially in the present and can develop an orientation facilitating their integration into Israeli society in the future.

The participants were Ethiopian students at a college of education. Their feelings and perceptions were examined over two consecutive years by means of quantitative and qualitative research methods.

The findings of the present study show that Ethiopian students perceive the social climate at the college as positive with respect to their social relationships with non-Ethiopian students. In addition, they feel they are treated fairly within a multicultural environment. Over the years they have become more involved and integrated, as seen in the rate of their classroom participation and their student council activities. Expectations expressed by the participants indicated they were highly motivated to work in education in the future, to lead social change in their community, to become educational leaders, to institute changes in the schools they will teach in and to work toward building a leadership group in their community. In addition, the students expressed a desire to continue in higher education in the future and believe they are, indeed, likely to do so.

While the study only examined the perspective of Ethiopian students, the findings show that other visible minority groups can integrate well into an academic community. Thus, academic institutions that nurture a multicultural climate can potentially serve as socialization agents in educating undergraduate students toward

multiculturalism. Further, these students, particularly pre-service teachers, can in the future implement the principles of multicultural education within the Israeli educational system.