

Chapter 3

Higher Education Abroad: Trends among the Indigenous Palestinian Arab Minority in Israel

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ABSTRACT

Through an investigation tracing the historical origins and trends associated with the Palestinian Minority in Israel (PAMI), this chapter investigates why a large proportion of those students—33% in fact—now choose to study abroad. Data are drawn from official statistics, documents and representative studies of PAMI students' to thus enable the authors to identify key factors that hinder PAMI access to Higher Education (HE) in Israel. Limited access to HE in the State of Israel is a strong motivator for PAMI students studying abroad, as it provides greater opportunity to pursue HE. This chapter discusses the features of globalization that have led to the development of a highly competitive international academic market and the effect that this has had on PAMI students' choice of location for HE and also choice of chosen field of study.

INTRODUCTION

Studies have described the challenges that students encounter when studying either long-term or short-term outside their country of origin and when they return home (e.g., Tarrant, 2012; Brooks & Waters, 2011). However, there has been little research concerning the specific constraints that shape minority group members' decision to study abroad, let alone in an indigenous ethnic minority such as the Palestinian Arab Minority citizens of Israel (PAMI) (Arar & Haj Yehia, 2010, 2013; Brooks & Waters, 2011; Haj Yehia & Arar, 2014). Thus, the aim of this chapter is the identification of likely reasons for the large-scale mobility of PAMI students to study abroad and the main changes that have taken place in PAMI studies abroad over the last two decades. More specifically, this chapter aims to answer the following questions:

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1. *What motivating factors push PAMI students to continue their HE abroad?; and*
2. *What trends and changes have occurred in the characteristics of PAMI students' studies abroad?*

In order to answer these questions, the authors conducted a meta-analysis of existing theoretical and empirical research literature examining the relationship between minorities and marginal groups and mobility for HE and a review of recent literature on the political, economic, and historical characteristics influencing the development of HE for the PAI (Arar & Mustafa, 2011; Arar & Haj Yehia, 2010; 2013). Contemporary critical and cultural perspectives, including a post-colonial view of education, influenced the study design and data analysis (Kincheloe & Maclaren, 2002). Content analysis was applied to official documents, official statistics, and research by the authors. An endogenous model, that sees 'both the possible causes and the possible effects as located within the country being investigated' (Qyen, 1990, p. 6) was utilized. The analysis stems from the interest of two indigenous Palestinian Arab researchers from Israel who investigate and illuminate whether and how the social characteristics of PAMI students and the patterns of their studies in HE reflect the social characteristics of Israel and the policies it implements (Qyen, 1990).

BACKGROUND

PAMI students travelling to foreign countries usually undertake long-term studies to acquire a degree, while few PAMI students undertake short-term studies abroad. Typically, PAMI graduates seek to pursue post-doctoral programs abroad for no more than two years and, inclusive of a scholarship, such as the United States' (US) Fulbright Foundation program (Haj Yehia, 2013), the DAAD foundation in Germany (Haj Yehia, 2007) and, PAMI graduate students who participate in special programs in international development and leadership such as the Ford Foundation Program in the US (Haj Yehia & Arar, 2014). Israeli universities have little involvement in the credits system of international programs, such as Erasmus (Teichler, 2001), and they have only recently started to develop special programs in cooperation with international partners including Tempos Iris Program in Europe. Thus, few PAMI students have benefitted from programs such as these. For PAMI students, a national minority group in Israel, short-term studies abroad in English-speaking countries can help with the acquisition of English language skills especially where English is the language of instruction (Haj Yehia & Arar, 2014).

There are several reasons why PAMI students prefer to study in long-term courses abroad (Haj Yehia & Arar, 2014):

- PAMI students show a strong preference for the study of Medicine, Pharmacy and Paramedical disciplines. It is more difficult to gain access to these disciplines in Israeli HE Institutions (HEIs) than HEIs abroad and so the desire to study these disciplines is a strong motivator for study abroad. Typically, however, the period of study abroad is longer-term rather than short-term.
- Many PAMI students understand that long-term studies for an academic degree abroad presents far greater employment opportunities than specific career development or personal self-realization courses, which short-term studies abroad may offer (Arar & Haj Yehia, 2010; Brooks & Waters, 2011).

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