

Promoting "Shared Citizenship" in Kindergartens

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The kindergarten teacher is one of the most significant figures for young children. Her behavior in the kindergarten is a product of her perception of the world, her attitudes and her professional development, including her participation in in-service programs. **Merchavim** – the Institute for the Advancement of "Shared Citizenship" in Israel – in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, offers kindergarten teachers an in-service program called "Let's Play on Sesame Street". The curriculum of this program is based on the model of "shared citizenship" that includes five central concepts: identity, access, fairness, spaces of agreement and active shared citizenship. The aim is to cultivate an awareness of different communities and identities in Israeli society, and thereby to promote a more socially just environment.

The purpose of the present study was to evaluate change in the cognitive, emotional, and instrumental attitudes of kindergarten teachers towards the core concepts of "shared citizenship" in their private and professional life as a result of participating in the program.

Participants in the study included 176 kindergarten teachers from Beit Shemesh, Jerusalem, Kfar Saba, Acre, Madjer, Isfiya, Rahat, and Kfar Manda. About half were Jewish, while the others were Bedouin, Druze or Arab. Attitudes toward the core concepts of "shared citizenship" were examined by means of a questionnaire. Each questionnaire item described situations both from everyday adult life (private sphere) and within the kindergarten setting (professional sphere). The situations dealt with various dilemmas and related to the core concepts of "shared citizenship". Participants had to decide to what extent they agreed with the suggested solutions.

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