

ARE THE HUMANITIES NO LONGER RELEVANT
IN THE 21ST CENTURY?
THE CASE OF ISRAEL – SUPPLY AND DEMAND
FOR THE HUMANITIES IN ISRAEL’S ACADEMIC
INSTITUTIONS: BETWEEN ACADEMIC POLICY
AND “MARKET FORCES”

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ABSTRACT

Aim. In view of the diminishing demand for the humanities in Israel, we explore the profiles of current students of humanities in one high school and one university in Israel.

Method. This study reviews the changes in the demand for and status of academic humanities studies and maps the profile of students of the humanities, both high school students and high school graduates over the age of 18. In total, 136 students (73 males and 60 females) participated in this survey-based study

Results and Conclusion. The results show a positive and significant correlation between attitudes regarding the humanities and motivation to study these subjects in the future. In addition, a positive correlation was found between values of honesty, helping others, and contribution to the country, and motivation to study the humanities.

Contribution. The findings of this study contribute by daring to challenge the perception concerning the insignificant status of the humanities in our day and age – aimed at eliminating them and rendering them irrelevant.

Key words: Humanities, higher education, student profiles, values, motivation, academia

The humanities are an inclusive term referring to a number of branches of study, among others philosophy, the arts, and languages. All of these deal with areas of human interest (Triger, 2007), in contrast to disciplines that deal with the study of natural processes (physics and chemistry) and social interactions (sociology and economics). According to the definition of the Council for



Higher Education in Israel, among the disciplines included in the humanities are Jewish studies as well as humanistic and human culture. The humanities study the various manifestations of the human spirit and human creativity throughout history. In other words, scholars examine what humans have done relative to the unique reality at a particular time and in a particular place, in relation to the universal essence of life and its meanings in diverse cultures.

Researchers in the humanities address the various dimensions of human life, from the abstract to the concrete, throughout the history of human culture. Scholars observe the products of humankind, reflected in language and symbols, in religion and in the law, within government, in ideology and world-views, ritual and myths, literature and poetry, thought and art, mathematics and philosophy, hermeneutics and chronicles of science, history and music, architecture and sculpture, folklore and time dependent consciousness, written memory and the constantly renewing creation within the sphere of human thought, with all uniqueness and changing hues. The humanities also deal with unique abilities for encouraging intellectual curiosity, the mysteries of creation, the history of science, the wording of new problems, and asking new questions. In addition, the humanities have a unique value-based contribution to imparting knowledge and advancing wisdom, truth and justice, freedom and equality, ethics and kindness, justice and peace (Elior, 2011).

The term *humanistic studies* refers to all subjects within the disciplines of humanities, social studies, and the arts, and is based on the classic perception according to which the goals of the humanities are to shape a learned and open-minded individual and to create a knowledgeable society that encourages the development of culture, ethics, and sociopolitical values (Lamm, 1993). For the philosopher Plato, the humanities were the only way to achieve a life of meaning. He saw in the intellectual a desire to search for truth, reason, beauty, and good (Goldman, 2014).

It is possible to say that the humanities are the manifestation of all areas of knowledge, expressing human culture and human creativity in general and in the Jewish world in particular.

CHANGES IN THE STATUS OF THE HUMANITIES IN ACADEMIA

In the distant past, from ancient Greece until the nineteenth century Europe, the elite status of the humanities was preserved, while strengthening the relationship between education and individual excellence, creating a deeper understanding of the humanities, and teaching the humanities. The educational approach was based on the belief that the road to educating for excellence passes through the study of the humanities. In contrast with the currently accepted approach, the humanities were perceived as practical, providing vital tools for mankind's efforts to achieve its goals and for achieving success. These studies were not seen as a luxury but rather as vital to man's adaptation in life.

Despite the crises during the history of the west, as well as the crisis of values, the status of the humanities was maintained (Rinon, 2014).

From the second half of the 1990s, a change occurred in the attitude of students towards the humanities. Humanities programs are emptying out, as can be seen by the number of students enrolling in the humanities. The numbers dropped significantly from 18.5% in 1996, 11.7% in 2001, 9.5% in 2006, to only 7.4% in 2013. The low demand is also apparent when examining the number of students applying for the humanities in Israel, which dropped from 6,330 at the beginning of the twenty-first century to only 4,200 in 2012/13 (Council for Higher Education [CHE], 2014a, 2014b). A prime example of this decline may be seen when looking at the number of students who enrolled in the literature program at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. In the 2018/19 school year only 18 students enrolled in this program. This number is small compared to the 1950s when there were approximately 200 students in the Hebrew Literature program (Shamir, 2009).

A similar phenomenon has been taking place worldwide. The decrease in demand for the humanities matches the drop in the number of faculty members employed in teaching the humanities. Research findings (Frank & Gabler, 2006) indicate that the number of lecturers in the humanities has dropped dramatically. Between 1915 and 1995, the number decreased by 41%, while the number of faculty members in the social sciences increased by 222%.

Similarly, the depreciation of the status of Bible studies in Israel. Chaim Ben-Ayun (2011) attributes the devaluation of the status of Bible studies to several factors. First, there is a worldwide process of depreciation in the status of the humanities. In addition, shifting forces are influencing the world of education and causing accelerated growth of technological fields at the expense of the humanities. Yair Zakovitch (2005) discusses an additional cause of the depreciation in the status of the humanities and speaks about the distance between the world of the Bible from that of the students, as manifested by the lifestyle of the characters described and the linguistic style, which is not understood by the students.

THE STATUS OF THE HUMANITIES VS. THE STATUS OF THE EXACT SCIENCES IN ISRAEL AND ABROAD

The deterioration in the status of the humanities is not unique to the Israeli education system. A similar process is taking place throughout the western world. From the second half of the 19th century applied subjects were considered practical and suitable for the working class. Moreover, applied studies were included in the curriculum in many countries. The proportion of countries in which the exact sciences were taught in elementary school grew from 83% in the 1940s to 98% in the 1970s (Kamens & Benavot, 1992).

The decline in the prestige of the humanities in the western world is the result of the Second World War. During this period, secondary education

became universal. Schools were required to cope with a diverse student population and with society's expectation for employment-focused education. At the same time, the cultural approach that emphasized the importance of internal knowledge, gave way to a utilitarian approach that promoted the structure of knowledge within high school education. Therefore, greater importance was placed on the study of the sciences than on the humanities (Lamm, 1993).

This change, which also occurred in the United States, was reflected in reforms that were based on a functional assumption. They recommended giving priority to the study of mathematics, the sciences, and technological literacy in American secondary education (Yogev, 1990). Also in Israel, the functional utilitarian approach is central to the determination of goals for education. An example of this may be seen in the *Tomorrow 98 Report* by the supreme commission for scientific and technological education (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1992). This report highlights the claim that comprehensive and advanced scientific and technological education is the foundation for any development and success in a variety of fields such as security, industry, agriculture, and many others. Despite the fact that this report recognizes the importance of the humanities, it places greater importance on the study of the sciences and technology.

In Israel, the drop-in humanities studies in high school education has influenced the situation in academia more significantly than in other countries. The reason is that in other countries, such as the UK or the United States, there are exclusive private schools, where the humanities are combined with the sciences (Cookson & Persell, 1985). This ensures that the cultural heritage is carried over to the societal elite.

In addition, in Israel there is an extreme polarization between specializing in the sciences and in the humanities, than is customary in countries in the western world. In high school, students are permitted to study for their matriculation exams. The majority choose to be tested in humanities subjects, since the number of compulsory humanities subjects is very limited. A comparative study shows that, in contrast to Israel, many countries have implemented methods that aim to maintain the balance between humanities studies and the sciences (Friedman & Ben-Galim, 1988).

The influence of scientific studies may be seen in the issue concerning the "scientific" nature of the humanities. Yoav Rinon (2014) emphasizes that, in addition to the fact that a scientific nature raises the prestige of the discipline, both on a personal and on a professional level, it also receives research funding. However, the humanities are not defined as "scientific", since these branches of study often include contradictory theories that cannot be bridged. These courses of study are perceived as subjective and emotional. In addition, in academia the natural sciences and technological research have become the primary standard for evaluating the humanities, causing the humanities to turn towards the exact and meticulous science of the natural sciences – and in this way, to forfeit their unique nature.

Several factors explain the changes that have occurred in the status of the humanities:

This field is perceived as preserving a culture and therefore the study methods in these subjects are outdated and not updated (Shenhar, 2007).

The depreciated value of the humanities and the scanty representation of graduates of the humanities in the centers of power and employment (Shenhar, 2007).

Changes in the value scale used to decide on an occupation: There is a close relationship between the value society places on its norms and the direction that its young people choose to take. In the past, norms prioritized the value of education in determining the status of an occupation, while at the present time norms emphasizing financial remuneration have become more central to the choice of an occupation (Shenhar, 2007). This process has precipitated a crisis within the humanities, since the humanities are regarded as not practical and not being able to provide a career (Nussbaum, 2010).

Value changes within academia: In his writings, Friedrich Nietzsche (1999) described this change as one related to the shift in the character of studies in universities in his era. The universities have transitioned from placing value on excellence, relating to the personal character of the student, to placing value on the practicality of the vocation. In addition, at this time, universities lean towards a capitalistic for-profit approach.

Value changes within society and culture: There is a tyranny of the fashionable, and independent and creative thinking have declined (Kleinberg, 2006; Shamir, 2012).

A growing percentage of students are enrolled in private colleges: Over 50% of undergraduate students are currently studying in colleges, where the humanities are absent. Humanities studies are offered in the form of enrichment courses and as an afterthought, and not as primary or inherent courses (Kleinberg, 2006).

OBSTACLES FACING STUDENTS IN FACULTIES OF THE HUMANITIES

Currently, young people wishing to choose the humanities encounter barriers. We shall analyse these barriers from two points of view - the social-sociological perspective and the economic perspective.

The Social-Sociological Perspective

The Jewish humanities are not popular (Shamir, 2009). Students regard these disciplines as old-fashioned and irrelevant for modern life. As a result, there is a decline in the standard of students accepted to these courses of study (lower/more accommodating admission terms). Outstanding students are attracted to prestigious and highly regarded programs, and therefore those who choose these disciplines know that they are not regarded as prestigious from a social point of view (Shenhar, 2007).

The Economic Perspective

The humanistic professions reflect a socioeconomic phenomenon characterized by globalization, privatization, and capitalism. Young people seek profitability and utilitarianism – and the humanities are not perceived as such. Young people prefer to turn to financially rewarding professions (Shamir, 2009). They therefore seek disciplines that will facilitate employment in the future – and the humanities are not perceived as such. In addition, the rules of supply and demand are contributing to the deteriorating status of these important and unattractive programs. Currently, students are fleeing the humanities and seeking professions with a potential for employment and a livelihood (Shamir, 2009, 2012).

Also with regard to faculty members within the humanities, only at around age 50 do faculty members earn tenure, while until then academic staff risk finding themselves outside academia and destitute. Hence, there is no temptation that might encourage motivation to apply for studying the humanities (Shamir, 2009).

THE CURRENT-DAY CHALLENGES OF INTELLECTUALS

Intellectuals can be found in universities, since there it is still permitted to think in a complex fashion and to engage in areas of interest that do not translate into money. The universities represent a world that still places value on the study of history, philosophy, and culture, however even there the limited space available to the humanities is diminishing. The humanities do not deliver merchandise that can be measured. They do not provide: prestige, status, power, money, rating (Kleinberg, 2006).

Intellectuals are supposed to engage in issues of research and critical thinking but in this materialist-individualist age, it's hard to find intellectuals, as is the case also worldwide. According to Shamir (2009, 2012), our postmodern age seems humanistic and humanitarian, but in practice it has turned into an age that does not encourage independent thought, research, and inquiry. The polarization is growing; each faction, whether conservative or liberal, believes only in its own axioms and radicalizes its positions.

HOW MUCH ARE THE HUMANITIES WORTH?

The crisis within the humanities programs has caused numerous issues with regard to their funding. One of the primary issues is the question of whether to forgo the spirit of the humanities and their importance and necessity for Israeli society, due to financial constraints? Is budgeting for the humanities correct financially, and should they be supported even though the future is not bright?

In 2008 the *Fund for the Advancement of the Humanities and Social Sciences in Israel* was established, as a joint initiative of the Yad Hanadiv

Foundation and the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) of the Commission of Higher Education (CHE). The fund was established in response to the budget constraints and the fear that significant areas of knowledge within the humanities would disappear. The aims of the fund are to support the long term need for the humanities within Israeli universities. The fund works to promote cooperation between the universities, educational innovation, as well as scholarships for senior faculty. In 2012 it was decided that the total annual funding would be set at NIS 60,000 for multiple years. Following the conclusion of the funding for the first stage of the fund's activity, the needs of the humanities in Israel for the next few years were reevaluated. Results of the evaluation pointed to the success of the fund's activities in drawing scientists back into the faculties of the humanities, renewing teaching in these faculties, and in particular, they marked the success in creating inter-university curricula that encourage the expansion of the number of subjects studied in Israel, make optimal use of the resources available in the system (CHE, 2013a, 2013b).

The Rottenstreich Project is another program of the CHE (2014b) intended to encourage outstanding doctoral students in the humanities and to promote the training of high-quality faculty members for instruction and research at Israeli universities. The annual grant in this program is NIS 80,000.

Budget planning for 2015 – in a meeting that took place on November 5, 2014, the Planning and Budgeting Committee (PBC) decided to emphasize reinforcement of the humanities. Therefore, under its auspices and that of the Council for Higher Education, a permanent committee was created that would work to formulate policy regarding the humanities and, in general, offer specific suggestions and initiatives towards the aim of meeting the defined needs. It was decided to exclude all initiatives in the humanities from any further budget cuts, as were planned towards the end of the 2014/15 school year (CHE, 2014a).

THE HUMANITIES – AT ANY COST?

In the past, hundreds of students would enroll annually in the Hebrew Literature program at the Hebrew University, while in 2012 only seven students enrolled (Shamir, 2012). This finding requires comprehensive examination of various opinions: Is it necessary to continue investing in these disciplines? What are the justifications of those who claim that there is indeed a need? And what are the justifications of those who claim that there is no longer a need to continue insisting on the existence of the humanities?

Objections to Investments in the Humanities

Objections to the continued existence and funding of the humanities are: In the opinion of many people, the humanities are an example of the waste of money in academia, since these fields are subsidized three times and even five times more than engineering. This is regarded as a waste, among other things

because there are many humanities' professionals in the workforce, while the economy is suffering from a shortage of graduates of technological colleges (Rinon, 2014). Hillel Gershuni (2014) contends that there is no need to fund the humanities. Much public money is invested in faculties of the humanities and the value of their research output is dubitable. There is strong opposition to the funding of yeshivas (religious schools), even though humanities departments are considered sacred and worthy of funding. He objects to the approach that reforms should be implemented to ensure income for students of the humanities. If they are looking for an income, they can look for a practical profession. The Israeli public was never asked whether it was willing to fund faculties of the humanities. The decision regarding funding belongs to the officials of the Council for Higher Education, which has an enormous budget and chooses to divide it up according to its interests. Every citizen should be able to contribute to the area of study they would like to see succeeding and thriving, an "open market", and in this way control would be taken from the government that uses public finding to meet its needs, and placed in the hands of the public. The heads of the yeshivas and the heads of the academies prefer the easy way of receiving funding, by lobbying the public through political manipulations. If taxes and government funding would be reduced the public would have more money to invest wherever they choose.

SUPPORT OF CONTINUED INVESTMENTS IN THE HUMANITIES

In contrast, there are strong arguments in favor of continuing to fund humanities studies. For example, Aliza Shenhar (2007) contends that additional financial resources should be invested in Jewish studies. Shamir (2012) criticizes the fact that insufficient resources have been allocated to research in the field of Hebrew culture and, in addition, the shortage of resources directed towards programs for outstanding students within the humanities. The justification for the cuts in funding for the humanities is superficial (Lea, 2014), since no money is saved by closing down departments belonging to the humanities. The claim is that the budget should be redistributed. The humanities are suffering from a decrease in their programs or even closure. This can be explained by the cuts in funding as a result of financial crises, but this reason is superficial and can be disproved. While the humanities experienced a drop-in funding, other university programs have grown. In other words, the universities did have resources that could have helped with the reduced funding of the humanities, but these were used elsewhere. The universities focus on market values and, in step with the academic capitalism formed, they are inclined to cutting the budgets of the humanities and to invest the funds in areas related directly to the capitalist rat race.

The extensive contribution of the humanities to their students: Programs affiliated with the humanities deal mainly with the arts, as these reveal cul-

ture that is hidden from our eyes. The students acquire knowledge in new and ancient languages, acquire unfamiliar areas of knowledge. The aim of the studies is to deepen varied expressions of the human spirit and the infinite imagination of man. This, in order to extract themselves, as much as possible, for the culture and time to which the individual belongs. The students delve into the divine source of law, justice, and morality in different cultures. Since every human endeavor is temporary while values are eternal, values are associated with the holy and the exalted, the deity and the angels who are endowed with eternity, inscribed in the tablets of heaven like the ten commandments or placed in the hands of the priesthood that is responsible for the eternal cycles and for the instruction of Bible and of the law, knowledge and the truth, justice and morality.

Moreover, students are exposed to the intellectual insight that is the basis of human existence, which has remained unchanged since the beginning of culture, such as life and death, sexuality and procreation, maturity and orphanhood, youth and old age, fear and joy, hunger and love, guilt and shame, power and weakness, liberty and honor – all of these are manifested in the rich past of the humanities through disciplines related to visual art. This reality educates towards a humanist, pluralist, universal approach, as well as the recognition of human dignity. The humanities teach that throughout history there have been and always will be various cultures and religions, with diverse beliefs, memories, and values and different points of view that contain numerous contradictions, but all have the right to exist and be heard. Both scholars and students are taught to criticize the structures of power and the mechanisms of silencing and exclusion and to deepen their understanding of the differentiation between predetermined and universal privileges and obligations into which a person is born, and those chosen voluntarily. There is no doubt that those students previously exposed to the humanities were intellectuals who helped society and its quality of life wherever they were. A society that strives for justice, morals, peace, equality, liberty, imparting knowledge, expanding horizons, challenging thought, and criticism, requires wide support of the humanities so that they will exist (Elior, 2011).

The humanities are the very spirit of western democracy. A society that enhances critical thought, a questioning and balanced perspective, should support the humanities, as narrow studies such as mathematics, science, economics, and computers are unable to prepare citizens for this. Contents and methods imparted by the humanities are the only ones that maintain not only culture but rather also democracy and the autonomous citizen. The humanities are essential for higher education. Through the humanities it is possible to form critical thinking, creativity, and empathy. When these central components do not exist in society, the population might suffer and might even exist under pseudo-democratic rule, the rule of figures of authority. Observing education from the perspective of economic growth, as characteristic of many educational systems around the world, might lead to the diminishing and even the elimination of democracy. Martha Nussbaum (2010) supports a human model

of development that focuses on the individual's capacity of critical and holistic thinking through problems and particularly political problems that affect the entire nation. Those who refuse to examine society critically and who study the information presented to them in the media uncritically, might support the government blindly. Values and integration of the arts are extremely essential for any person who is part of society and helps provide real civil life with a wider worldview. As evident from her words, democracy needs an educational system that promotes the humanities in order to create a productive society. Education, and particularly higher education, must support the struggle against education that is aimed only at profitable goals, in favor of education that promotes democracy. The economic development model of education that is accumulating momentum may ensure a stable economic future but might also, among other things, empty the future of the economy from its very purpose of existence (Nussbaum, 2010). Processes of capitalization occurring in the recent decade in Israeli society include neoliberal conceptions that are generating apathy with regard to the fate of the humanities, which are perceived by citizens as a luxury and an outdated field in a time when it is necessary to cut back anything that does not yield economic profit (Ezuz, 2011).

The role of the intellectual is to demand more complex thinking and practice that is more just. In a cultural environment that is gradually becoming superficial, in a cultural reality that lacks moral responsibility, the role of the intellectual is to speak out against the consensus, to go against the current, to reinstate the significance of words and ideas, to fight for social cohesiveness, to fight for those that the market left behind and for those that the media conceals, to emphasize injustice, to be humane (Kleinberg, 2006).

Researchers of education and society criticize the decline in the status of the humanities (Radinsky, 2014), which leads to the narrow-mindedness character of today's graduates and they call for the revival of cultural literacy (Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1998).

In the context of Jewish culture, it is possible to grasp the significance of preserving humanities disciplines by understanding the significance of maintaining Jewish studies and Bible studies for coming generations. The crisis in the humanities disciplines in Israel constitutes an existential problem, since the Jewish people are a small nation surrounded by hostility and therefore have little chances of surviving without spirituality and intellectualism and maintaining a worthwhile life. The power of the Bible is like a common element shared by all ideological streams that are dividing Israeli society (Lamm, 1999). The Bible has great value for preserving historical memory in national consciousness and as the source of our language, literature, festivals, and customs (Zakovitch, 1995). The significance of Bible studies is in their definition of the secular Israeli's identity (Amit, 2002). In these crisis circumstances, some disciplines dealing with Jewish history and culture will cease to exist in time and the depreciation in Jewish studies causes a crisis in Jewish identity, particularly among the secular, raising in young Israelis doubts concerning Zionism and Israel and, in general, does severe damage to the cohesiveness of the Jewish-

-Israeli collective. Another discipline included in the humanities is literature, which has an important role in ensuring our existence. Literature is at the base of collective identity and it is what generated our essence as a new nation. Among the Jewish people, Hebrew literature preceded the land and the state; even before we had eating utensils and tools of war we had writers whose dreams and philosophy generated the state. The revival of the new Hebrew culture and language is what causes the different political streams to remain in the country (Shamir, 2012).

ATTEMPTS TO REVIVE THE HUMANITIES – HOW?

Understanding the significance of maintaining the humanities, many solutions arise with the purpose of reinstating their prestigious status. In 1991 a committee was established with the purpose of examining the state of Jewish studies in the secular school system, i.e., the Shenhar Committee. This committee formulated its principles in a document called “People and world – Jewish culture in a changing world.” As a solution to changing the existing state, the committee recommended that responsibility for education be returned to the students’ society and community, since the source of the problem is technological society, the changes and controversies that are dividing Israeli society, namely it is external to the school. The school, on its part, must encourage the secular public to express their values, develop their culture, and critique their own achievements. It is necessary to take action to help Jewish culture become a component with positive meaning for young secular people, one that builds their self-identity. Ideologically, the committee strives for change and transformations both in the values of Israeli society, as they were the source of the depreciation of humanistic studies, and in the schools. However, the Ministry of Education did not prepare adequately for dealing with this issue. This was evident in the lack of resources allocated where necessary and in generous resource allocation to the religious school system, where Jewish education is becoming gradually stronger. The key to change must be manifested in training teachers and preparing curricula and study materials adapted to the worldview and values of the population studying in the secular school system. Shenhar (2007) emphasizes that dealing with these controversies with respect and tolerance for the different opinions is the essence of school-based education. In addition, Jewish studies are part of humanistic studies, of which a core essence is developing creativity based on free dialogue while coping with the challenges set by the human spirit. It is necessary to use the school as a focus for developing options for maintaining a Jewish-Israeli culture that is not dependent on halakhic authority and that is affiliated with Jewish history, with criticism and innovations as befitting contemporary challenges. Decision makers should be called upon to act in favor of the national resilience of Israel’s society and state; it is necessary to invest more in Jewish studies and in issues of Jewish identity.

The universities have a major role in maintaining the stories of the different cultures, reading and writing, art and production, symbolism and interpretation, literature and poetry, liberty and justice, truth and equality, illustration and simplification, philosophy and mathematics. Educating for activism and social involvement can begin at home but it may expand and become enhanced by external bodies such as schools, youth movements, and in higher education. Key components of education in the humanities are the ability to doubt decisions made, to ask questions, and to understand how to explore them (Elior, 2011). Yoav Rinon (2014) suggests that in order to deal with the current crisis it is necessary to reinstate the relevance of the humanities and of their instruction by rebuilding their association with education. First and foremost, it is necessary to reinstate the original role of the humanities as an educational element that centers on human beings. The greatest current challenge of those in the humanities is to see not only those who excel, rather society as a whole. It is necessary to nurture excellence, but at the same time not to neglect nurturing society as a whole through education. University education is no less important than the earlier stages of human education as universities are located at the top of the pyramid, due to their social responsibility, and therefore the humanities disciplines at universities have a considerable impact on people as it serves as a means of imparting values (Rinon, 2014).

The Israeli spirit and social solidarity will only be rehabilitated through a joint effort of many agents who leave their safe place and operate on behalf of the weakening spirit and the fraternity that has been converted to money on the free market. It is not enough to know what is good and right. Knowing what is good requires doing good, turning theory into practice. The image of the society in which we live is worth fighting for. The community should be called upon to enrich one another's knowledge, strengthen their aspirations, make them knowledgeable, and particularly dare to act and to make the world a better place (Kleinberg, 2006).

By diverting resources to studies of Hebrew culture it will be possible to solve the crisis. But this does not happen because everyone focuses on themselves and hence, due to a lack of demand and a lack of leadership, programs with a long-standing tradition and achievements are slowly disappearing. Ensuring the future of the country and of the people depends on maintaining these programs (Shamir, 2012).

Teaching must be made accessible to the students, i.e., more modern. For this purpose, it is necessary to hold a contemporary dialogue with the text, to talk about its messages and less about concepts that are distant from the student (Gruber, 2005). Nussbaum (2010) supports the Socratic method whereby it is necessary to promote the imparting of logical thought as well as deep understanding of the information. Education must include goals beyond the existing goals, based on developing skills and proficiencies that will later be utilized in the workplace. Otherwise, the humanities will be discarded from the universities, meaning that higher education will make it possible to purchase an academic degree but will not be able to produce thinkers with critical knowledge.

Another option for solution is to combine the humanities with other disciplines. A study conducted in 1914 found that most of the American colleges included in the sample required students to sign up for courses that combine: history, literature, philosophy, English. In contrast, in 1990 hardly one third of the colleges included in the sample required students to take these subjects; the requirements had been reduced (Ginsberg, 2011).

Culpa mea is a report that believes that the humanities can revitalize themselves if they return to their original designation, investigating man between heaven and earth, God and beast. For Plato the humanities were not a gate to knowledge, rather they were the main route to a meaningful life. Plato, similar to the students, realized that he knows nothing, together with the wish to know about the meaning of life. In the past you did not need a degree to be an intellectual, only the passion to seek the truth, wisdom, beauty, and good. The same intellectuals received from the humanities tools that served them in life and helped them to help others as well. This is the open approach that students seek; they come to study the humanities for ideological reasons, as these disciplines do not promise them an income. But because faculties of the humanities and their staff provide neither ideology nor a promise of future employment, students leave for other programs that are more relevant for helping others, such as social work, and even avoid turning to these fields to begin with. If the staff wants to hold on to the students they must advocate an approach whereby the stories about Plato and Socrates and old values of intellectuals do not distract us from modern life rather give us wise tools that can be used in modern life (Goldman, 2014).

A low admission threshold: In order to raise their status and the number of those interested in the humanities and to try and solve the crisis, the admission threshold in Hebrew literature programs has been reduced, but this is not leading to success in recruiting students for these programs, while in the past when the Hebrew literature program had a demanding mandatory curriculum it did not lack students. The diminishing admission requirements might generate contempt and reduce the value of the humanities. In light of the failure in this area, it is necessary to operate a contrary marketing strategy, to raise the level of programs on Hebrew culture by granting scholarships to outstanding students, and this will also make it possible to maintain these programs in future generations (Shamir, 2012).

Planning the budget: According to the work plan defined by the appointed committee, recommendations with budgetary significance are anticipated in topics such as collaboration between institutions on language instruction, setting criteria for funding publications in the humanities, as well as regarding research infrastructure in the humanities (CHE, 2014a). In an attempt to find solutions, the most recent solutions suggested are merging programs from the various faculties and in different universities, changing study programs and adapting the programs, making them more practical and less academic. These solutions were proposed in the summer by the CHE, led by Professor Malka Rappaport-Hovav (Branovsky, 2014).

It is evident that the low demand leads to change, for example at Tel Aviv University the Hebrew Literature program has recently become a combined program called the *Literature Program*, which includes the Hebrew Literature program as well as the Theory of Literature program, i.e., the Hebrew Literature program no longer exists as a distinct program. Tel Aviv University has also decided that programs in Jewish studies would be merged to form one expanded program in order to try and overcome the low demand that is resulting in few students and many professors (Shamir, 2009).

Despite the many attempts to revitalize the humanities in our era, it is evident that most of these attempts have not resulted in a meaningful change in the status of the humanities since, as stated, the demand for these disciplines is still low and constantly declining.

Due to the understanding of many researchers that it is necessary to solve the crisis in the humanities in its first stages, Ben Ayun (2011) conducted a study that measured the attitudes of elementary school students towards humanities subjects. The research findings show a moderate positive attitude of 4th-6th grade students to Bible studies. Most claim that the lessons are not boring and that they develop thinking, contribute to general knowledge, and are important as a means of acquiring history on the national level. Most declare their love of this subject. In addition, a drop-in students' level of interest was evident with the rise in grade. Asher Shkedi (2000) corroborated these findings in his study. The attitude of junior high students towards Bible studies was explored. These students were found to agree that the subject is important for increasing the sense of belonging and identification, although most perceived it as uninteresting and irrelevant, namely there is a dissonance between students' attitude towards the significance of the subject and their level of interest in it. Hanna Ayalon and Avraham Yogev (1995) studied the relative status of the humanities versus scientific studies in Israeli high schools and found that two main factors eventually led to a crisis in the humanities disciplines: the number of students who wish to study them and their profile. A gender difference was found, whereby there is a higher representation of girls in the humanities and a higher representation of boys in scientific subjects. The humanities were also found to be characterized by relatively high proportions of students from weak social groups.

From these studies it is evident that the crisis begins in early stages at educational institutions and a possible solution for the crisis can come from within the educational systems. Hence, the purpose of the current study is to explore the attitudes of high school students to the humanities, as they are in a critical age when thinking is more concretely directed at choosing an academic field of study. In addition, the investigation of students who had already chosen the humanities does not yield interesting results as when exploring high school students, because the former had already chosen this field. We will check whether the attitude of high school students to humanities disciplines predicts their readiness to apply for academic studies in the humanities in the future. In addition, we will examine the barriers encountered by those who are inte-

rested in studying but do not report that they will indeed apply to study this field in the future.

First, we hypothesize that most of the students will report a positive attitude towards the humanities but will not show readiness to study these subjects in the future. Second, we hypothesize that the profile of those applying will be characterized by a high socioeconomic status, based on the study conducted by Ayalon and Yogev (1995) more women will apply than men, those belonging to the Arab nationality will be less inclined to apply than those belonging to the Jewish nationality, contradicting the finding of Ayalon and Yogev (1995) regarding weak groups, students with low grades will apply more than outstanding students, and students for whom prestigious and practical values are important when seeking a career will be less inclined to apply to the humanities than those for whom these values are not important.

In light of the research literature, the research questions are:

Is there an association, and to what degree, between a positive attitude of high school students to the humanities and motivation to study these subjects?

Will gender differences be found, and to what degree, in the motivation to study the humanities?

Will national differences be found between Arab and Jews, and to what degree, in their motivation to study the humanities?

Will differences be found, and to what degree, between those with low and high achievements (grades) in the motivation to study the humanities?

Will value-based differences be found, and to what degree, in the motivation to study the humanities?

METHOD

Participants. The study consisted of 136 respondents (73 boys and 60 girls, mean age 16.65, age range 15-19, standard deviation 1.2), including 104 high school students in grades 10-12 (53 boys and 51 girls, 76 Jews and 18 Arabs, mean age 16.15, age range 15-18, standard deviation 0.84) and 32 respondents who were high school graduates, older than 18 (20 girls and 9 boys, mean age 18.45, age range 18-19, standard deviation 0.5).

The questionnaire was sent to the students in the faculty of humanities in their first year. The memory of these students from humanities in high school is the closest.

Instruments. Several questionnaires were utilized:

Personal background Questionnaire (gender, age, nation (Arab, Jews))

Academic background Questionnaire (faculty, degree)

Questionnaire on dysfunctional beliefs when choosing a study discipline and a career (Saka & Gati, 2007), alpha=0.86;

Questionnaire on aspirations for the future (Klivansky, 1993), alpha 0.56-0.64;

Questionnaire on motivation to acquire a higher education (Doron, 2008), alpha 0.64-0.87;

Questionnaire on orientation of study goals (Levontin, 2008), alpha 0.85-0.89.

Procedure. In the current case study the respondents were sampled from a high school and from a pre-military preparatory program. At the school the questionnaires were administered to the students in their homeroom classroom.

RESULTS

The study examined the profile of those studying the humanities and the association between the attitude towards the humanities and motivation to study these subjects. Pearson's correlations and t-tests were conducted. The sample included 104 high school students, 51 girls and 53 boys, and 29 pre-military program students (high school graduates, older than 18), 9 women and 20 men (a total of 133 respondents). See Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics by gender

		N	%
General sample	Females	60	43.5
	Males	73	52.9
	Total	133	96.4
High school	Females	51	49
	Males	53	51
	Total	104	100
Pre-military preparatory program (high school graduates, older than 18)	Females	9	28.1
	Males	20	62.5
	Total	29	90.9

Source: own research.

The age range in the overall sample was 15-19, the mean age 16.65, and the standard deviation 1.23. The age range for the pre-military preparatory program was 18-19, mean age 16.15, standard deviation 0.84. The age range for the school was 15-18, mean age 18.45, standard deviation 0.5. See Table 2.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics by Age

	Age range	Mean	SD
Overall sample	19-15	16.65	1.23
Pre-military preparatory program	18-19	16.15	0.84
School	15-18	18.45	0.5

Source: own research.

In order to examine whether and to what degree there is an association

between the positive attitude of high school students towards the humanities and motivation to study them, a Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated. A significant positive correlation ($p < .01$, $r=0.4$) was found. A positive correlation was also found in the school sample ($p < .01$, $r=0.34$) and in the pre-military preparatory program ($p < .05$, $r=0.44$).

Table 3
Pearson's Correlations between Attitude Means and Behavior Means

	N	Pearson's correlation
Overall sample	135	**0.40
School	103	**0.34
Pre-military preparatory program	32	*0.44

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Source: own research.

Based on these findings, Pearson's tests were conducted for each subject separately. A significant correlation was found between the attitude to the humanities and motivation to study these subjects, for each of the subjects. The highest correlation found was for the arts, while Bible studies received the lowest correlation.

Table 4
Pearson's Correlations between Attitude and Behavior, for Each Subject Separately

Subject	Pearson's correlation
Literature	**0.43
History	**0.40
Art	**0.61
Languages	**0.41
Bible	**0.29

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Source: own research

In addition, we examined whether and to what degree gender differences would be found in motivation to study the humanities. A t-test was conducted between two independent samples. No significant difference was found from a gender perspective ($t = -1.29$; $df = 130$; $p = n.s.$).

With regard to the question of whether and to what degree national differences would be found between Arabs and Jews in motivation to study the humanities, a t-test was conducted between two independent samples. No significant difference was found in the different nationality levels ($t = 0.52$; $df = 122$; $p = n.s.$).

With regard to the question of whether and to what degree differences would be found between those with low and high achievements (grades) in

motivation to study the humanities, we distinguished between types of students: poor/medium/outstanding. A one-way ANOVA was conducted. No significant difference was found between the different types of students ($F(3,125) = 0.79; p = \text{n.s.}$).

Finally, with regard to the question of whether and to what degree value-related differences would be found in motivation to study the humanities, we defined values of prestige, such as money and practicality, and readiness to study the humanities (Saka & Gati, 2007). A Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated. No significant correlation was found ($p > .05, r = -0.1$).

Moreover, we addressed values of integrity, helping others, and contribution to the country, and readiness to study the humanities (Saka & Gati, 2007). A Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated. A significant positive correlation was found ($p < .05, r = 0.21$).

With the aim of examining whether there is a difference by age in understanding the significance of teaching the humanities at school, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Significant differences were found in the different age levels ($F(4, 128) = 3.49; p < .05$).

Table 5
Differences in Thinking by Age

Age	N	Mean	SD
15	22	3.02	0.20
16	52	3.04	0.13
17	22	3.61	0.12
18	24	3.51	0.15
19	13	3.70	0.20
Total	133	3.28	0.07

Source: own research

In addition, with the aim of examining whether there is a difference in motivation to study the humanities by age, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. Significant differences were found in readiness to study, by age ($F_{(4,127)} = 3.73; p < .01$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In Israel and around the world there is a depreciation in the status of the humanities, raising questions regarding the significance of their continued existence in a world strongly attracted to values of modernity and technology. In a world of instant responses and immediate gratification, humanist values seem irrelevant. As a result, the current study tries to settle the issue of humanities in the present world and tries to understand whether in contemporary Israel there is still a need for the humanities. The current study

examined attitudes to the humanities as well as the profile of those applying to study these subjects.

This study found a positive correlation between attitude and behavior, namely, a positive attitude towards the humanities will predict motivation to study these subjects in the future, and vice versa. A negative attitude will predict a lack of motivation to study humanities subjects in the future. In contrast to these findings, Shkedi (2000) in his study indicated a dissonance between the attitudes of junior high school students to Bible studies. The students testified that the subject is important as it arouses a sense of belonging and identification but did not express much interest in the subject. Therefore, we would expect, according to the literature review, to see a dissonance between attitudes and behavior, but in practice we see that the attitude towards the humanities predicts behavior. For example, if a 10th grade student reports that in general he likes humanities subjects, there is a high likelihood that he will indeed study them in the future. This can be explained by the cognitive dissonance theory, whereby when people have two contradictory attitudes they will change one of the attitudes in order to reach a state of balance (Festinger, 1957). According to this theory, teens may currently be very opinionated, causing them to follow their attitudes and avoid dissonance even at the cost of an unpractical profession, for instance students who report that they like the subject of literature will find it hard to report a dissonance, i.e., to report that they will not study what they like. In our era, young people follow their desires and rebel against society's wishes and therefore those students will deal with the dissonance by changing their attitude, namely will say that they like the subject and intend to study it.

In contrast to the study by Ayalon and Yogev (1995) that indicated gender differences between boys and girls in the humanities and found that girls study the humanities more than boys, the current study found no gender difference between boys and girls in studying the humanities. This may be because today it is more customary for girls to study subjects considered "masculine" and the proportion of girls who study sciences has been increasing over the years, such that the difference is not as significant as it once was. Proof of this is given in Table 6. It is evident that over the years, the disparity between men and women in studying the humanities is diminishing. For example, in 1989 27.4% of men reported that they were planning to study the humanities, while in 2012 42.7% of men were studying the humanities. Findings from surveys such as these illuminate the current findings.

In their study, Ayalon and Yogev (1995) found that the humanities are characterized by relatively high rates of students belonging to weak social groups while in the current study it was hypothesized, in contrast to their research findings, that those belonging to the Arab nationality would apply for the humanities in lower rates than Jews. Accordingly, a comparison was held between the Arab nationality, representing a weak social group, and the Jewish nationality. In contrast to the hypothesis, no significant difference was found in readiness to study the humanities between the Arab and Jewish nationalities.

A possible explanation is that the sample may have included a relatively small number of Arab nationals compared to Jewish nationals (of all high school students, 76 were Jews and 18 Arabs).

Continuing the study by Ayalon and Yogev (1995), it was hypothesized that those with low grades, who represent a weak social group compared to the outstanding students, will be more inclined to apply to study the humanities. But no association was found between students' grades and applying to study the humanities. This may have been due to difficulties with self-report – respondents may have found it hard to report that they are medium or poor students. For example, a grade of 70 – some would say that it is medium and some poor. The confirmation of this can be found in the answers of the respondents most of whom reported that they are mediocre students and an insufficient number reported that they are poor or outstanding students.

When examining the profile of those applying to study the humanities, with regard to their value scale, no significant correlation was found between values of prestige and practicality and motivation to study the humanities. A possible explanation is that values of prestige and materialism are engrained in us from a young age unrelated to our choice of career, namely both those who apply and those who do not intend to apply for the humanities uphold prestigious values.

In addition, respondents with values such as integrity, helping others, and contributing to the country are motivated to study the humanities and a positive correlation was found. This finding contributes to understanding the profile of those applying to study the humanities as these values are indeed associated with readiness to study the humanities in the future. This finding also attests that the humanities encompass value-laden and meaningful studies. It is also possible that these subjects have considerable significance, as this value scale is the most important for human society and therefore it is evident that the humanities have a considerable contribution to human society (Goldman, 2014). This shows that those who showed readiness to study the humanities are inclined to help others and that the humanities might direct and give tools for this purpose and therefore they have a positive impact.

The current study also found differences by age – older respondents had a more positive attitude to the humanities. In the case of high school students and older, there is a rise with age in the readiness to study the humanities in the future. The phenomenon of degree depreciation may be related to this. It is possible that many subjects do not withstand the test of practicality, for instance a graduate of economics might then apply for philosophy studies out of a feeling that since many degrees are considered unpractical, it is beneficial to study an interesting subject. This is a type of understanding that comes with age.

In summary, the research findings lead to the conclusion that the humanities have a high value-related contribution and that it is important that they continue. The humanities are essential for a critical human society and therefore it is necessary to make sure that these programs continue to exist, but not

in their current form. Changes should be made in the study tracks, making them more practical and attractive, such that they speak the “language of the current generation.”

From all the above, it is evident that the classical humanities are gradually diminishing, but it is important to continue revitalizing them by raising awareness on the public agenda of decision makers and in high school studies – because the current study found that the attitude of high school students predicts their future choice of study discipline.

A humanities-related academic experience may constitute an important tool for motivation to study these unpopular disciplines and to make those who study them a part of a meaningful prestigious club.

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