



# Abstracts

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## **The recruitment, preparation, tenacity, and academic development of quality teachers: A comparison between diverse models of teacher preparation programs**

Ruth Zuzovsky, Smadar Donitsa-Schmidt

This study is based on the discussion concerning the appropriate nature of the initial teacher preparation programs. Its aim was to examine the extent of the effectiveness of two models of initial teacher preparation programs that are widespread in Israel and throughout the world: the simultaneous model, in which disciplinary content and pedagogical studies are taught at the same time, and the continuing model, which is intended for university graduates who have completed their Bachelor's degrees and wish to teach. The research kept track of 12,445 graduates of two cycles of teacher preparation programs in all the colleges over a period of 10 years. These individuals completed their studies in 2005-2006. Of them, 10,428 were graduates of the simultaneous model (467 in the Excellence program) and 1-550 were graduates of the continuing model. The main measures of effectiveness that were investigated examined the rate of integration into teaching and tenacity of the graduates of the various programs as well as their work and professional advancement.

The research findings indicate that in most of the measures, the graduates of the continuing teacher education programs and the graduates of the Excellence programs who studied according to the simultaneous model enjoyed a certain advantage. No advantage in any of the measures was found for the graduates of the regular simultaneous program. On the basis of the findings of this study, it is difficult to stipulate categorically whether the supporters' expectations of the continuing model were actually realized. In any event, since both models possess pedagogical advantages that stem from their structure, there is no justification at this point to support a definite and absolute transition to the continuing model.

**Key words:** academic teacher education, effectiveness, models of teacher preparation programs, teacher preparation.

**E-mail:** ruthz@post.tau.ac.il; smadar.donitsa@smkb.ac.il

## Alternative teacher education programs in Israel

Neomi Feigin, Barbara Fresko, Pninat Tal, Rachel Talmor,  
Irit Levy-Feldman, Haggai Kupermintz

Alternative teacher education programs have multiplied in various countries due to teacher shortages. This paper describes five alternative programs that were implemented in Israel between 2009 and 2013, and includes a profile of the students, an examination of the challenges facing the implementation of these programs, and a look at the induction of program graduates into the school system.

Data sources included program documents, interviews with graduates and program directors, questionnaires administered to graduates, and data from the Ministry of Education. Major findings showed that alternative programs differed from one another and from traditional programs with respect to the course load required before starting to teach and the extent of practical training; programs attracted older and more educated students, as well as more male students; implementation difficulties derived from the short notice given before opening a program, the heavy study load and intensity of the programs, and the low number of days available for practical training; after only one year of teaching, graduates felt self-confident and satisfied at having chosen teaching as a career. Moreover, attrition was significantly lower for graduates of alternative programs.

Overall, the alternative training programs seem to have achieved their goals of recruiting high-level teachers who are being retained successfully in the school system.

**Key words:** alternative teacher education programs, teacher training.

**E-mail:** feigin@macam.ac.il; barbara@beitberl.ac.il; pninattal@gmail.com;  
talmor@wincol.ac.il; Irit.Feldman@smkb.ac.il; kuperh@edu.haifa.ac.il

## **The needs for professional development on the part of teacher educators**

Einat Guberman

This study examined the nature of the needs for professional development on the part of teacher educators who work in institutions of higher education. The research participants comprised 1,158 teacher educators from six main countries – England, Ireland, Belgium, Holland, Israel, and Norway – who completed a questionnaire that examined general interest in professional development and preferences for specific activities and ways of studying.

The teacher educators expressed a great deal of interest in professional development. The preference for specific activities was influenced by global, local, and individual factors. Beginning teacher educators and those with Master's degrees prefer activities connected with teaching, while teacher educators with Ph.D. degrees who hold full-time positions prefer activities associated with research and publishing. The preferred way of studying is learning with and from colleagues. As compared with respondents from the rest of the countries, the teacher educators from Israel expressed greater interest in several activities connected with research and academic publishing, and relatively low interest in observing colleagues. The article discusses the implications of the research findings for the teacher preparation and professional development programs required by teacher educators.

**Key words:** comparative research, professional development, stances, teacher education, teacher educators.

**E-mail:** [ainatgub@gmail.com](mailto:ainatgub@gmail.com)

## Challenges in fostering teacher educators' technological-pedagogical innovation

Olzan Goldstein, Miri Shonfeld

This quantitative study examined the changes in the integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) into teaching among faculty members at four colleges of education in the period between 2008 and 2013. The study involved 267 faculty members in the first round of data collection and 322 in the second. Data were collected by means of a questionnaire that examined (1) the ways in which ICT is integrated into teaching; (2) personal characteristics (attitudes; ICT skills; innovation adoption phase) and (3) the requisite conditions at the colleges (infrastructure and equipment; technical, pedagogical, and administrative support).

The findings indicate a significant increase in the scope of ICT integration into teaching by faculty members (especially in ways that reinforce traditional teaching) and into students' practicum, attitudes, and skills. There was also an improvement in certain types of essential conditions for ICT-based teaching at the colleges. The most prominent predictor of integrating ICT into teaching was ICT skills. Other predictors were faculty members' attitudes toward the impact of ICT on teaching and the pedagogical support provided at the colleges. The current challenge facing the colleges is the development of ICT-based pedagogical innovation among the faculty.

**Key words:** faculty, ICT integration into teaching and teacher education, pre-service teachers, teacher education.

**E-mail:** olzang@gmail.com; mirish@macam.ac.il

## **Teacher educators' perceptions regarding the seminar course: From an educational-pedagogical to an academic approach**

Revital Heimann, Irit Haskel-Shaham, Esther Cohen-Sayag,  
Hanna Kurland

The seminar courses taught in all academic institutions constitute the highlight of the B.Ed. studies, in which academic writing plays an essential role. Our research aim was to reveal teachers' perceptions regarding seminar course and the implications of these perceptions for the course practices. We interviewed 26 seminar course teachers with regard to how they perceive the role of the student seminar paper in the teacher education process and in professional life. The analysis yielded six perceptions that were either explicitly stated or indirectly derived from the teachers' descriptions of course activity. These perceptions pertained to gaining knowledge of the subject matter; enhancing general academic skills; developing a personal and a professional identity; generating links between theoretical and practical knowledge in teaching; contributing to the academic community; and nurturing involvement and effecting change in the civic community. Although individual seminar course teachers had differing perceptions, the main focus of the seminar work appeared to be on making connections between theory and the students' experience and practices. These perceptions concur partially with approaches to teaching academic writing mentioned in the literature as well as to approaches in teacher education.

**Key words:** academic writing, perceptions of teacher educators, seminar course.

**E-mail:** rheimann@dyellin.ac.il; irithaskel@dyellin.ac.il; coheesther@gmail.com;  
hkurland@bezeqint.net

## From Reader-Story-Internet to an Online Interpretative Community and Back

Miri Miller, Zvia Lotan

In the action research presented in this article, a model of literature teaching in an elementary-school digital environment was developed. The research was the result of a sense of dissatisfaction concerning students' interpretative ability, the planning of their teaching units, and their sparse use of the computer and the Internet in learning and teaching. The dissatisfaction motivated the researchers to develop a teaching model titled "From Reader-Story-Internet to an Online Interpretative Community and Back". This model is based (1) on literature teaching in accordance with the "Reader's Reaction" theory; (2) on focusing the process of constructing the literary interpretation on the experience, on creativity, and on enjoyment; and (3) on the development of an interpretative community of readers in a digital environment.

The teaching model was developed in three circles of action research. The first circle examined the way to encourage the students to undertake a personal-interpretative literary journey and focused on the creation of a dialogue between them and the story and the Internet. In the second circle, an "online interpretative community" was formed during the course of the group journey – a journey in which the personal reactions to and interpretations of the other students' words were exposed. (The returns to the Internet enriched those interpretations.) The third circle explored the way to help the students enable their pupils to experience a "Reader-Story-Internet" journey and be part of an online interpretative community.

The technology permitted the students to locate information, engage in rich communication, empower the experience of the encounter with creativity, and reflect the entire process. The teaching model enabled them to leave their world, acquire new insights, and return to it "richer".

**Key words:** digital learning environment, interpretation, Literature teaching, "Reader's Reaction" theory.

**E-mail:** miri.miller@levinsky.ac.il; izvial@gmail.com



## Children's perspectives regarding their social relationships

Yael Dayan, Margalit Ziv, Ora Aviezer, Ester Vardi-Rath

Recognizing the importance of integrating children's perspectives into early childhood research stems from post-modern educational approaches as well as from the childhood sociology theory. Moreover, it reflects a democratic worldview that emphasizes children's rights to express their ideas. Previous research on children's perspectives investigated their perceptions both of the teacher's role and of diverse experiences in kindergarten. The current study focuses on children's perspectives regarding social relationships in kindergarten. While previous research on this topic highlighted the importance of peer relationships for children's development and learning, it did not reflect children's subjective social experiences from their own perspective.

In the current study, three small groups of children were videotaped during free play and were then interviewed in order to gain their interpretation of the play event. The main findings indicate that children seek to engage in play with others, and that during play they are sensitive to their own and other children's desires and difficulties. Owing to children's ability to describe the complexity and richness of their experiences, it is important to integrate their perspectives into research regarding multiple early childhood issues, and, additionally, to include children's perspectives in the training of early childhood teachers.

**Key words:** children's perspectives research, early childhood, social relationships, training of early childhood teachers.

**E-mail:** yael.dayan@mail.huji.ac.il; margalit.ziv@gmail.com; oaviezer@gmail.com; esterv@kaye.ac.il

## The challenge of assisting struggling teachers

Eliezer Yariv, Efrat Kass

This study examines principals' views regarding the actions they take to assist struggling teachers on their staff, as well as successful, effective ways of coping with the difficulties experienced by these teachers. A total of 219 principals were asked to complete a quantitative questionnaire developed specifically for the study. They were also asked to describe a typical case of a struggling teacher, explain the nature of the difficulties, describe the intervention steps they took, and estimate how effective they perceived those steps to be. In an open-ended question, the participants were further asked to describe the steps they had taken in a successful intervention. Findings show that the principals preferred to help struggling teachers mainly through inclusion activities rather than through organizational steps such as assigning the teacher to a different class. Very rarely did the principals choose to employ sanctions and threats. A strong correlation was found between the use of inclusion activities and the principals' perception of its efficacy. A content analysis revealed that it was not the type of actions taken that made the intervention successful so much as the existence of certain conditions: (a) the principal's willingness to intervene and invest efforts; (b) the diversity of the principal's actions and the types of help; (c) the teacher's willingness to change; (d) flexibility in managing the intervention. Due to their difficulties in taking assertive initiative, the principals preferred the use of sporadic and few measures in which they actually did not believe. These findings indicate the need to train principals to include skills for coping effectively with the phenomenon of struggling teachers as well as the need to encourage the principals to be proactive rather than attempt to avoid dealing with this phenomenon.

**Key words:** assistance, school, school principals, struggling teachers.

**E-mail:** elyariv@gmail.com; efratkass@gmail.com

## Teacher attrition: What do principals think about it?

Rinat Arviv-Elyashiv

Teacher attrition in the Western world has increased over the past decades. Numerous teachers, particularly those at the beginning of their careers, tend to drop out of teaching permanently. While many studies have examined this phenomenon from the perspective of the teachers, this study focuses on that of the school principals. The principal is an important figure in the teachers' careers and exerts a direct and significant influence on their professional development and well-being.

This study examines three aspects of principals' perceptions regarding teacher attrition: (1) teachers' motives for dropping out of teaching; (2) solutions for coping with this phenomenon; (3) ways to decrease teacher attrition. It is based on eight interviews with school principals and on a survey performed on a non-representative sample of 126 principals. The findings reveal a two-dimensional perception of teacher attrition. The first dimension is overt attrition, namely, dropping out of teaching. Principals perceive it to be a negative phenomenon if quality teachers decide to leave the profession, and a positive one if unmotivated and non-qualified teachers do so. The second dimension is hidden attrition. This is how principals refer to unsuitable teachers who cling to their positions, protected by their union rights, and cannot be dismissed. The solutions in these cases are individual arrangements in each school and frequent mobility among schools.

**Key words:** hidden attrition, overt attrition, school principals, teacher attrition.

**E-mail:** rinat.arviv@smkb.ac.il