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Operative Ways of Coping with the Problem of the Shortage of Teachers

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Abstract

In the past decade, the recognition has formed that the situation of the training for teaching requires a change. An ongoing trend of a decline in the percentage of those who registered for the studies of teaching led, as aforementioned, to a personnel crisis in the staffing of teaching positions required in the schools. Hence, the Ministry of Education and the institutions for training personnel in teaching created alternative training programs alongside the traditional programs for the training of teachers. These programs are intended for groups of learners with specific characteristics that set special acceptance conditions. In a number of these programs there was a change in the contents or in the layout of the studies. The alternative programs in training for teaching are very important since they are intended to provide an answer to a number of main needs, including the increase of the demand for teaching, the prevention of the dropping out from teaching, the increase of the quality of the teaching personnel, and change of the perceptions accepted in the system.

Keywords: Education system, quality teachers, teaching Studies, perception of teacher training, teachers Professional Status.

Promotion of the Teachers' Social and Professional Status

The social status and the professional status are built through symbolic interaction. The possibilities that exist for this interaction are rich and diverse. Social and professional status entails not only salary but also a series of components that express high social esteem towards the individual or towards the group. Professional status sometimes has equivalent importance to the component of the direct work salary – or higher importance. This is especially correct when dealing with efforts to promote the deteriorating status of the teaching profession.

The education system of Finland is proud of the fact that its teachers come from the upper quarter of people with intellectual ability in society. Japan has declared the teaching profession as a preferred profession and has adopted a series of steps, including a preferential salary, to ensure that there will be high demand for every available teaching position. These two examples are an expression of the wide variety of possibilities of action for the building of a high status for the practitioners of the teaching profession.

In Israel, the public of teachers and with it the entire public are longing to rehabilitate the shaky status of the teaching profession, primarily after a lengthy period of bitter struggles between the governments and the teachers' organizations. The crisis of the teachers will not be resolved without the adjustment of the components of salary to the level of the demand for the profession. The increase of the salary that does not depend on the change of the demand curve may be found to be standing still, in all that pertains to the coping with the described crisis. Therefore, there is the need for the methodical and relevant measurement of the level of the demand. The observation of action strategies in certain countries indicates that in the 1990s, for instance, the education system of Japan determined that the updating of the level of salary will be set according to the regular measurement of the level of demand for the teaching profession. When this level decreased from the agreed upon definition, the salary was increased¹.

¹Volansky, E. (2011). The Absence of Demand for the Teaching Profession in Israel – From Crisis to Challenge: International Trends and Implications for Israel. In A. Shatz-Oppenheimer, D. Meshkit, & S. Zilberstrom (Eds.) *To Be a Teacher – On the Path of the Entry into Teaching* (pp. 23-54). Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: Mofet Institute and Ministry of Education. (Hebrew)

Finland encourages people to participate in the teaching profession by maintaining a high level of salary in comparison to other areas of occupation in the economy; only 10%-12% of those who register to the institutions of teacher training are accepted by them and they are characterized as having high academic abilities and high cultural capital, and they must have a master's degree in Education or in the disciplinary field they want to teach². Korea, Australia, Holland, Norway, and New Zealand sought to cope with changes in the structure of employment in their national economies and yet to preserve a competitive level of salary for the teaching profession³.

Increasing the Teacher's Professional Autonomy

In the past decades the status of theories that address motivation at work has risen. Some have considerable influence on the ways of organization of the education system. Research works in the field of effective schools that addressed the self-managing schools indicated that the degree of involvement in the decision making processes and ways of organization of the work in the school influence the level of identification of the teaching staff with the school objectives and their level of commitment to them. Consequently, the teacher's satisfaction with her work also increases⁴.

The school is a complex organization, and during one day of studies many decisions relating to individuals and groups, to classes, to grades, and to the school as an entire community are made – to the point that it is impossible to act in it in the framework of the traditional hierarchical model of action of educational leadership. To ensure the relationship between the decisions and their implementation, the organizational values, goals, and manners of achievement of the educational institution must be the province of the entire community of teachers. The involvement of the education worker in the formation of the educational values from which the action goals of the school are derived empowers its identification, and therefore its commitment to their implementation also increases. The policy that encourages involvement in the processes of decision making contributes to the reduction of the gaps between goals and their realization in complex organizations.

This trend contributes to the strengthening of the teacher's status, her professional ability, and her commitment to the values of the organization where she works and to the improvement of the school achievements. In Israel, the completion of this reform, which is still far from actualization, is found among the challenges facing the education system⁵.

Professional Development of Teachers throughout Their Career

In many of the industrialized countries there is the steadily increasing recognition of the need for the gradual transition to teaching methods that emphasize the aspects of independent learning, inter-disciplinary problem solving, encouragement of non-standard thinking, direction of the student by the teacher to knowledge sources, ways of teaching that make increasing use of information and communication technology, experiential learning that inspires the student's curiosity, encouragement and development of thinking, criticism, and self-esteem. All these are perceived today as vital skills that should be emphasized in the processes of teaching and learning.

There is steadily increasing awareness in different countries, including Canada, Singapore, Hong-Kong, Korea, Japan, and Australia, that the change of the teaching methods in the described direction is necessary from the stages of early education. The basis of the assumption is that one of the main goals of the education system is to prepare the young people for the job market that is rapidly changing. The conscious change in the education systems is expressed in the increasing recognition that the accumulation of knowledge and education is a process that lasts throughout the person's occupational career, primarily in light of the constant appearance of new areas of knowledge in the job market and the disappearance of others.

²Caldwell, B. J., & Spinks, M. J. (1998). *Beyond the Self-Managing School*. London: Falmer Press.

³OECD (2004). *Education at a Glance 2006*. Teachers' Salaries.

⁴Williams, W. (2003). Innovative Concepts for the Advancement of Effective School Cultures: Leadership by Right and Contribution by Choice. In E. Volansky & I. Friedman (Eds.) *Self-Managing Schools – An International Look* (pp. 113-134). Jerusalem: Ministry of Education. (Hebrew)

⁵Volansky, E. (2011). The Absence of Demand for the Teaching Profession in Israel – From Crisis to Challenge: International Trends and Implications for Israel. In A. Shatz-Oppenheimer, D. Meshkit, & S. Zilberstrom (Eds.) *To Be a Teacher – On the Path of the Entry into Teaching* (pp. 23-54). Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: Mofet Institute and Ministry of Education. (Hebrew)

A worker who completes his studies for the academic degree may be found to be non-relevant to the job market if he does not focus on learning and training processes.

The meaning of this aspect is that the learning process never ends and that the differentiation is steadily blurring between the learner in the framework of formal studies in the school or in the university and the learner in the framework of his work place. Every person who seeks to be relevant to a company and to the changing job market is required to learn and be updated throughout all his professional circles of life, regardless of his place and position. The teaching profession in this matter is significant.

The professional development of teachers is not a new topic in the education system. The innovation is the central position accorded to the perception of lifelong learning around the world in all professional occupations. Therefore, the investment in this field is steadily increasing among all the partners – the governments, the local governments, the schools, and the teachers.

Advancement of the demand for the Teaching Profession

The attracting of appropriate candidates for the profession and their retention is a central objective in society in general and in the public system in particular. An appropriate teacher must be intelligent and educated, a person of values, an educator, and leader, and therefore it is necessary to attract to the profession all people who can continue to learn, to cause meaningful learning in the students, to muse about the nature of knowledge and knowing and to effect a change. It is necessary to create the conditions that facilitate the retention of appropriate people in the profession⁶.

The promotion of the demand for the teaching profession can be undertaken in more than one channel of action. Some countries publicly announce that the teaching profession is preferred, and therefore they raise the salary level to encourage the demand for this field (Switzerland, Luxembourg, Japan, Singapore, Finland, and certain states in the United States and provinces in Canada). Some countries add to the salary benefits such as housing (Singapore). Others enable professional development in other countries (Japan, Canada). Some countries encourage the professional development of teachers throughout their careers (Ireland, Canada, Japan), while others increase the demands from teaching training (Finland, Sweden, Canada).

Most of the countries adopt a multidisciplinary or multisystem approach with the goal of improving the quality of the human capital that engages in teaching and education. In other words, we are found in an era in which the national expenditure for education is steadily increasing in many countries⁷.

The complexity of the crisis in Israel and the coping with the challenge entailed by the increase of the demand for teaching obligate the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach, or in other words, the adoption of a policy that encompasses intertwined and complementary areas of action. These areas include the need to cause the people who turn to teaching to have cultural capital that comes from the upper quarter of the young people in Israel and in actuality those with prominent talent among them, and in addition to ensure the reinforcement of the professional and public status of the teacher through a list of simple means, to encourage constant professional development and lifelong learning of all teachers, to re-define the ways of action necessary to integrate new teachers, and to prepare the teachers towards the change of the paradigm of teaching as necessitated by the era in which knowledge is open and accessible to all.

Additional suggestions for the recruitment of candidates for teaching can also include:

1. Change in the fundamental assumptions related to the recruitment of candidates. There are two possibilities alongside the ongoing recruitment of candidates for teaching. The first possibility, which is good primarily for the periphery, is to identify target populations that for different reasons did not realize their academic potential and their intellectual capital, as measured in the high school matriculation examinations and in psychometric examinations, to enrich the knowledge store and their learning abilities during a preparatory year of intensive

⁶Kfir, D., & Ariav, T. (2008). Summary: The Crisis in the Training of Teaching and Education Workers – Characteristics and Proposals for Correction, In: D. Kfir & T. Ariav (Eds.) *The Crisis of Teaching: Towards Corrected Training of Teachers* (pp. 335-346). Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem and HaKibbutz HeMeuchad Press. (Hebrew)

⁷Volansky, E. (2011). The Absence of Demand for the Teaching Profession in Israel – From Crisis to Challenge: International Trends and Implications for Israel. In A. Shatz-Oppenheimer, D. Meshkit, & S. Zilberstrom (Eds.) *To Be a Teacher – On the Path of the Entry into Teaching* (pp. 23-54). Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: Mofet Institute and Ministry of Education. (Hebrew)

experience and knowledge in various fields. At the end of this preparatory year, it is necessary to choose the candidates with the greatest potential to be teachers of level and ability and to train them for teaching in programs existing today in the colleges. The second possibility is to develop programs for the training of academically educated people for teaching according to the professional model, a model that exists in certain countries and is established on school-based teacher education. In this model, the training for teaching is anchored in comprehensive practical work on the status of the teachers in the induction period. The training is accompanied by courses and workshops, both on the academic campus and in the field. This possibility obligates training and the change in the role perception of the teachers' teachers and mentor teachers in the field.

2. Integration of new teachers in the system and support of them. The importance of the development of the role of the mentor teacher should be emphasized as one of the main and critical roles required for the retention of new teachers. It is further necessary to emphasize the professional development. In Israel research studies on this issue were performed, but the results are apparent primarily in reports and articles and far less in the implementation of the insights.
3. Change in the processes of placement of training graduates for teaching in the field. The processes of the accompaniment and support of the new teacher need to be done using experienced teachers who specialized in this. These processes need to continue throughout the first years of work⁸.
4. Professional development of teachers. The education system in Israel is not different from other bureaucratic systems that have responsibility towards the citizens. Its agents, the people in the headquarters in the fields of expertise, the supervisors, the principals, and the teachers, are supposed to have considerable professional knowledge and the readiness to assume great personal responsibility derived from the meanings and processes that they adopt. An essential condition for the achievement of systemic goals based on personnel is the investment in this resource on the level required for the achievement of the systemic needs, but an investment is also required on the personal level. A critical mass of professional forces, with knowledge and ability to contribute of their experience and energy to the motivation of consistent and adjusted processes of continuation and renewal in organizations and in systems, is created from the development and cultivation of personnel with high self-esteem. This esteem is based on professional knowledge, on professional successes, and on appropriate reward that is both intrinsic and extrinsic.

Therefore, the focus on continuous and relevant professional development of teachers is an essential condition for the promotion of the education system and the continuous development of appropriate teachers.

Documents published during the past two decades delineate a miserable picture, according to which the most important field for the cultivation of the teachers, the field of the support of the quality of their work and their professional development, remains open and subject to ideological, political and budgetary vagaries. These vagaries express the absence of guidelines, the frequent changes of policy, and the waste of resources. All these lead to gloomy results⁹.

Support of the Youthening of the Teaching System

The international comparisons between the median age of teachers in Israel and that of teachers in the world indicate a similar trend. The age of the teachers is rising steadily. This situation contradicts the recognition that the new curricula that seek to incorporate learning in open information systems through information and communication technology are commensurate more with younger teachers than with experienced teachers. Therefore, it is proposed to adopt the emergent international trend and to lessen the teachers' age through a systemic program that will enable early retirement of the teachers who are so interested. The need to assimilate information and communication technology in teaching, the coping with the pace of occurrences, and the events in the school and in its environment, and the loss of the traditional focuses of authority in the opinion of children and youths – all these obligate the reduction of the age gap between the students and the teachers.

⁸Lazovsky, R., Reichenberg, R., & Zeiger, T. (2007). The Mentor Teacher in the Framework of Induction into Teaching: Desired Role Characteristics, Choice of the Role, Training towards It, and Evaluation of the Contribution to the Novice Teacher, *Pages*, 45, 56-89. (Hebrew)

⁹Avdor, S. (2008). The Required Change in the Characteristics of the Candidates for Teaching, Their Training, and Their Professional Development, In: D. Kfir & T. Ariav (Eds.) *The Crisis of Teaching: Towards Corrected Training of Teachers*. Van Lear Institute in Jerusalem and HaKibbutz HeMeuchad Press. (Hebrew)

Many older teachers understand this. More than a few of them seek, with the support of the teachers' organizations, to retire early, but most of them are refused. In the present situation, the education system has become a closed capsule, and people who find it difficult to function feel that they are locked inside. The lack of the possibility to end their role in the education system harms the status of the teaching profession, the image of the teachers, their dignity, and primarily the career of those who for most of the years worked with success and dedication but find it difficult to persevere because of their age. It is not chance that the policy accepted today in the world is to encourage the early retirement of teachers through appropriate incentives that rely on the increase of the education budgets.

Change of the Training Paradigm – Towards the Recruitment of Those with High Cultural Capital to Teaching

In the field of the training for teaching, there is room to re-think the recruitment of candidates and the process of their training. The system today addresses shortened programs for teacher training on the basis of the recruitment of candidates from the academic population. The situation today is that the training for the bachelor of education (B.Ed.), training whose importance cannot be underestimated in the continuum of the development of teacher training in Israel (what is called the process of the academization of teachers in Israel), does not utilize time effectively, places a heavy burden on the learners, and is not sufficiently relevant to the training for the teaching professions. The studies of education and the practicum which are the core of the professional training, lose in the competition over the "student time", which primarily engages in the acquisition of knowledge and the submission of assignments in the studies of the teaching disciplines¹⁰.

On the question of the perception of the importance of the topics and fields learned in the specialization, which are intended to build the teachers' professional knowledge and to gradually develop their expertise, the teachers maintain overwhelmingly that it is necessary to continue and develop most of the topics learned during their training in the field of the studies of education (which constitute the core of the studies of the profession) in the advanced stages of their work, in the connection to the authentic reality in which they operate. There is a long list of topics that should be incorporated into the training at the expense of topics that are less relevant or less urgent¹¹.

Another point regarding the issue of the teacher training is that in light of the distress that appeared a number of years ago in the teaching force, it was possible to examine (and perhaps also to implement) a perception based on the training for teaching primarily on school-based teacher education. Professional researchers in the field of the training of teachers promote it happily. It is the code for different approaches in teacher training, which bypass the system of regular studies for a number of years in an academic institution for the training of teachers before the entrance into the teaching positions as an independent teacher¹². Today, from the recognition of the system of the urgent need to train teachers for Israel, different versions of this perception are implemented, some more successfully and some less successfully. These versions are temporary solutions, given the circumstances and pressures "to improve achievements" immediately in certain subjects and primarily to quickly fill the thinning ranks of teachers. The research literature that studied such models indicates that the model chosen recently in Israel (for people who lost their jobs in hi-tech and for other academically educated people) ensures less the retention of the teachers in the system in comparison to other models of teacher training in programs that bypass traditional pre-role training¹³.

¹⁰ Avdor, S. (2008). The Required Change in the Characteristics of the Candidates for Teaching, Their Training, and Their Professional Development, In: D. Kfir & T. Ariav (Eds.) *The Crisis of Teaching: Towards Corrected Training of Teachers*. Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem and HaKibbutz HeMeuchad Press. (Hebrew)
Avdor, S. (2001). *Universities and Colleges of Education as Environments for the Training for Teaching: Comparative Study of Knowledge Bases and Educational Approaches Reflected in the Perception of the Student Teachers of Their Training for the Secondary Schools*. Doctoral Dissertation, The Hebrew University in Jerusalem. (Hebrew)

¹¹ Kfir, D., Avdor, S., Reingold, R., & Hishrick, M. (2008). *Initial Training and Professional Development of Teachers – A Continuous and Continuing Process*, Research Report 3. Tel Aviv: Mofet Institute. (Hebrew)

¹² Avdor, S. (2011). Fateful Search for Appropriate Teachers: Defects in the Implementation of Knowledge Acquired for Navigation of the Education System. In: *Fateful Search: Society in Israel Looks of Good Teachers*. Mofet Institute. (Hebrew)

¹³ Boe, E., Cook, L. H., & Sunderland, R. J. (2008). Teacher Turnover: Examining Exit Attrition, Teaching Area Transfer, and School Migration. Retrieved from http://repository.upenn.edu/gse_pubs/184

A steadily increasing emphasis is apparent in the policy of the recruitment of quality teachers, when the main significance is the identification of candidates from among those whose cultural and intellectual capital is richer. This issue has grown stronger in Israel because in recent years the number of people turning to programs of four years of training in teaching has decreased, but the demand on the part of those with an academic degree has greatly increased, especially among those aged 40 and up who seek to re-train in teaching in the study programs in the colleges of education that last one year¹⁴.

The paradoxical situation of the manifest shortage in demand for the core subjects as opposed to the excess of demand for the “teaching support” educational subjects of learning, in which the scope of the training exceeds the needs of the system, presents the decision makers with two main dilemmas. The first dilemma is how to balance the demand for teaching according to the weight of the different subjects over the official curriculum, and the second dilemma is how to recruit more teachers with high academic abilities and high intellectual and cultural capital.

The data that indicate the absence of demand for teaching and primarily for the teaching of the core subjects obligate the search for a way to change the paradigm of traditional training of teachers.

Another proposed change is to allow those in the upper quarter of the students accepted to the studies, of all faculties and in the universities at first, which are the top decile of talent in Israel in every given age group, training for teaching after the end of the undergraduate (bachelor) degree. The model of action can be a direct path that enables the master studies in education that train for teaching or a path after the completion of the undergraduate degree in a format that grants a teaching certificate. Since the proposed path is for people with high abilities, it will also enable the shortening of the duration of the studies, as accepted today in programs designated for excelling students.

Such a program necessitates a system of incentives, if the aim is for the participants to integrate into teaching at the end of the compulsory studies. It may become clear that such a system of incentives may have far lower costs than the cost of training a teacher today.

¹⁴Volansky, E. (2011). The Absence of Demand for the Teaching Profession in Israel – From Crisis to Challenge: International Trends and Implications for Israel. In A. Shatz-Oppenheimer, D. Meshkit, & S. Zilberstrom (Eds.) *To Be a Teacher – On the Path of the Entry into Teaching* (pp. 23-54). Tel Aviv and Jerusalem: Mofet Institute and Ministry of Education. (Hebrew)